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THE TRANSITION PERIOD

BY

G. GREGORY SMITH, M.A.

BALLIOL COLLEGE, OXFORD

LECTURER IN ENGLISH IN THE UNIVERSITY OF EDINBURGH

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PREFACE.

THIS volume deals with the main European Literatures of the Fifteenth Century, when, according to critical tradition, the ideals of the mediæval world were transformed to the fashions of modern art. I have endeavoured in my treatment of the subject to discredit the pleasant fiction, which abides with us too securely, that the change from the Old to the New came suddenly and strangely as at the pass of a harlequin's wand. He who has most carefully tracked the windings and searched the nooks of this Great Valley will best know that there is no square wall and "high somdel," nor even a hedge of "hoked breres," between our Arcady and the Garden of the Rose. I can therefore promise no violent text-book contrasts, and I am bold to think that a generous uncertainty, or see-saw of impression, will best fulfil the purpose of

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the survey. And that uncertainty, in so far as it is the century's own and not my inadequate interpretation thereof, should disappoint none except the learned who discriminate exactly between things mediæval and things modern. It would be more difficult to gainsay that other popular judgment which has condemned the period as barren of imaginative genius; but I have tried, and I hope from no love of paradox, to find some consolation in the very justness of this estimate. It may be urged that a period which is not distracted by the influences of original and individual effort will more readily yield those comparative evidences of literary process which may be obscured in times of greater poetic account.

The chief difficulty is not one of language, though even within the narrow round of the literatures from which I have chosen my material there are worries enough for a linguistic cunning which I dare not claim. It lies in the method of treatment, in the discussion of individual works in relation to style, to subject-matter, to influence, or to comparative bearings. I have tried to fix upon the salient interest of each, and if I have laid stress on the poetic quality of one, or the vocabulary of another, or the historical elements in a third, or the effect of a fourth, it is because these seemed to be matters which must take precedence in a sketch of this tangled period. My intention

has been chiefly critical. I have said little, beyond giving the dates, of the literary lives of the authors. I trust I have escaped the opposite danger of producing a disjointed record of critical impressions. The chapter-headings supply a rough synthesis of the subject, and these have been grouped according to my conception of what are the positive and primary facts in the literary movement of the century. If it be objected that the grouping — under the main heads of allegorical change, the transition from Romance to Ballad, the dramatic *motif*, and the doctrine of Prose—is based too exclusively on the consideration of Form, I should urge that there is not a little critical propriety and much historical compulsion in the choice. The rather lengthy discussion of the vexed question of the origin of the Ballads is not offered as an attack on certain accredited views, but as a respectful statement of some new conclusions which have been forced upon me by the study of the European evidence.

Here, as in the other volumes, it has occasionally been found advisable, for editorial reasons, to overstep the strict chronological limits. But if I have taken Sir David Lyndsay from the sixteenth century because he is æsthetically more at one with the Scottish Chaucerians than with the Reformation versifiers, or have offered a *résumé* of the Drama before its position is defined in the fifteenth century, I have, on the other hand, given the *Celestina*

and the earlier Arts of Poetry as welcome hostages to later volumes. Latin, in so far as it is the medium of a continuing mediævalism, finds its place with the vernaculars, but the Latin of Humanism, which includes no small portion of the great literary output of fifteenth-century Italy, is the proper subject of the succeeding volume on the *Early Renaissance*.

I gratefully acknowledge the aid which I have received from friends in the reading of proofs, and I must specially thank the General Editor for his untiring heed to my importunities for advice, and for the use of sundry rare volumes from 'the secreit corneris of his gazophile.' His friendly interest, which has far outreached even the most generous notions of editorial duty, has increased my regret at this inadequate requital.

EDINBURGH, *March* 1900.

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THE TRANSITION PERIOD.

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ENGLAND: THE CHAUCERIAN TRADITION.

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IT is an academic tradition to speak regretfully of English letters in the fifteenth century, and to hasten, rather rudely, from praise of Chaucer to praise of Spenser. It might perhaps savour of paradox to exalt the commonplaces of Dame Juliana or even of the Monk of Bury, but it is a question

whether this epoch should be handed over entirely to the philologers and the curious. The very absence of outstanding individual genius may be anything but a drawback to the comparative study of literature, for it is during eras such as this, when the old is yielding to the new, that we may best discern not only the interaction of one nation with another, but, what is more important, the fundamental principles which are differently expressed in each. For our present purpose, therefore, we may have some cynical satisfaction in the study of this makeshift century. And the absence of evidence of higher literary art need not compel us to enthusiasm for Osbern of Bokenham and his fellows.

The critical lesson of the Fifteenth Century.

—If the imaginative literature of England was so poor in quality and in extent, that of the northern portion of the island, which during this century established a separate literary tradition, offers a strong contrast in both respects. It may be that the very comparison has exaggerated the poetic merits of the Scottish 'Makaris,' and has been responsible for the perennial fictions about the minor poets, founded alike on a misconception of Dunbar's random list and on ignorance of the extant remains; but the special excellence of the greater writers, James I., Henryson, Douglas, and above all, Dunbar himself, quite justifies the critical emphasis. So in this chapter we shall see English poetry at its nadir, and in the next chapter Scots at its zenith, if we except that later eminence in the

The English and Scottish contrast.

changed circumstances of the age of Burns and Scott. The contrast is not too violent, for the difference is, despite the increasing divergence of the national character, really only one of degree. There are in both those universal qualities of riotous enjoyment, coarse satire, and gloomy penitence, which express the spirit of the century; and in those more special matters of subject and form which are not of European interest there is a striking parallelism. The influence of Chaucer, for example, was supreme in both, but the results which it produced in each literature were very different. Why this should have happened may not prove an easy speculation.

English verse in the fifteenth century is for the most part a series of formal exercises by a number of writers professing a rather unreasoning discipleship to the mediæval Masters. It is not difficult to distinguish a note of individuality, especially towards the close of the period, yet it requires but scant reading to discover how strongly the poets are inspired and sustained by mere literary convention. The personal devotion of Occleve and Lydgate to Chaucer implied an artistic allegiance, an allegiance which their contemporaries and immediate successors, almost without exception, as readily acknowledged. Lesser craftsmen like Benedict Burgh or Stephen Hawes refined on this and in their turn gave thanks to the unoriginal Lydgate as

> "the most dulcet sprynge
> Of famous rethoryke, with balade ryall
> The chefe orygynal."

It is remarkable that, with the exception of an occasional borrowing from such as Christine de Pisan or Alain Chartier (in which amiable plagiarism from Continental sources the poets but followed their Master's example), the influence of Chaucer, or through him that of the *Roman de la Rose*, is paramount. The unity of *motif*, style, and method at least proves, despite the less competent handling, the honesty of the long-drawn praise of the "Maister dere"; and we may find therein ample justification for the persistent heresy of literary historians who have fathered on Chaucer himself all those pieces which are not too foolish or too Skeltonical for his gentle genius. Were it not for the occasional godsend of a wretched rhyme or a wanton final *e*, we might sometimes find it hard to vindicate our modern scepticism. We may therefore appreciate the courtesy which has prompted the addition of these Chaucerian Pieces of the fifteenth century as a supplement to the authoritative Oxford *Chaucer*[1]—though we are now supposed, in these exacter days, to know more of the claims of the Waltons and the Clanvowes.

The Chaucerian tradition.

The problem of the authorship of the *Court of Love* and of the *Flower and the Leaf* will remain for some time one of the vexed questions of literary antiquarianism. It may at least be said that the task of convincing lies with the anti-Chaucerians, who are as yet not quite on terms with each other, or perhaps

[1] The works of Chaucer, ed. Skeat, 6 vols., Oxford, 1894, with a seventh volume of *Chaucerian Pieces*, 1897.

sufficiently alive to the dangers of deducing literary evidence from the orthographic whims of transcribers. It is certainly true that the more purely literary considerations, for example, whether there is an absolute departure in these works from the uniform and characteristic quality of Chaucer's, have not been completely argued. At all events, we shall *lite pendente* deny ourselves the championship of that incomparable unknown Fair who wrote what Chaucer might well have written, and so avoid the charge of giving any undue literary eminence to a period when English letters were "in worst extremes, and on the perilous edge." This will appear a rather gratuitous condescension to those who hold that the *Court of Love* is of the sixteenth century, and even as late as Grimoald, Sackville, and Surrey.

It is almost entirely in respect of poetic power that the fifteenth century is so poor, for it did most creditable work in the development of prose, and it shaped the drama to popular ends. The explanation must be traced to the shortcoming of the individual rather than to any incurable cause of depression, for after all, despite our literary Darwinians, an epoch is great or little, not so much because of the intellectual environment, as because of the personality of its expression. Of influence, of preparation, of environment, there was more than enough, if such arguments hold good, to produce a second-rate Chaucer or a first-class Gower. The discipline of form, in the treatment of the octosyllabic and heroic couplets and of the stanza, and in an almost estab-

lished aversion to the lumbering alliteration, was a heritage of rich import. It produced, in England at least, no immediate results of positive value, but negatively it stayed, at a time when the language was in a dangerously unsettled condition, a return to the rags and tatters of an outworn day. The increasing attention to translation and to prose, the adjustment of a new poetic with its 'aureate terms,' indicate at once the suppression of the imaginative *vis*. To contrast this century with the eighteenth may, as with all such comparisons, be mere academic frippery; but the general bent towards prose, the liking for the satirical and social, and above all the obedience to the æsthetic canon of an earlier generation, give some flavour of historical analogy — with a certain serious exception, that the fifteenth century had no Pope to sum up the reasoned obedience of the era, because its obedience was unreasoning, and because it was quite incapable of understanding its intellectual chaos.

The problem of form.

We may further say of this lack of originality not only that the poets are indebted to their predecessors for form and subject, but that the borrowing in each case is practically the same. When poets, like undergraduates, sit down one and all to the same exercise on the same prescribed subjects, to be treated in certain prescribed ways, the Muses may well grow indifferent, and, in the old metaphor, "betake themselves to flight." One thing remains to the historian, that this very monotony of treatment gives him a more exact means of adjudicating between the poetasters.

He is saved from the critical absurdities which beset the perennial contrasts of such as Dryden and Pope, Scott and Dumas; he can appreciate to a nicety between the greater or less commonplaces, and the better or worse ear of Occleve and Lydgate and Hawes. It is poor consolation, and it would be altogether too depressing, did it not the more readily help us to opportunities of a wider European comparison.

John Lydgate.

Of the earlier Chaucerians Dan John Lydgate (?1370-?1448)[1] is probably the most interesting. If voluminousness be in his case, as in so many others, a concomitant of genius, he may hope to stand better with posterity, even though it must reject the long list of two hundred and fifty-one pieces enumerated by the unfriendly Ritson.[2] His authentic remains run to nearly one hundred and fifty thousand lines. An historian might reasonably despair of thoroughly digesting this mass, and

[1] *A Selection from the Minor Poems of Lydgate*, ed. Halliwell (Percy Society, 1840), which requires revision; *The Temple of Glass*, ed. Schick (E.E.T.S., 1891); *Æsop*, ed. Sauerstein (*Anglia*, ix. 1886); *The Assembly of Gods*, ed. Triggs (E.E.T.S., 1896); *Secrees of Philisoffres*, ed. Steele (E.E.T.S., 1894); *A Mumming at Hertford*, ed. Hammond (*Anglia*, xxii. 1899). Other texts are announced by the Early English Text Society, and some of the Legends have been printed by Horstmann (*Altenglische Legenden*).

[2] See *Bibliographia Poetica* (1802), pp. 66-90, for his list of "these stupid and fatigueing productions" by the "stil more stupid and disgusting author, who disgraces the name and patronage of his master Chaucer." The list is so crammed with inaccuracies, and the "criticism" is so obviously wrong-headed, that Dr Schick's severe indictment (*Temple of Glas*, cxlviii, &c.) was almost unnecessary.

might be tempted to travesty the pious sentiment of Benedict Burgh—

"Off John Lydgate how shulde we the sotyl trace";

but it is more than likely that no evidence will ever be forthcoming to alter the estimate based on an enforced selection. The extent of his work, coupled with the fact that most of it was done to order and that he seems on that account to have been compelled to retire from his priorate at Hatfield to the Bury of his early days, gives an almost professional flavour to his literary life. His earliest efforts were in the allegorical strain, as in *The Flour of Curtesye, The Black Knight, The Temple of Glass, The Assembly of Gods,* and *The Court of Sapience*; thereafter he wrote the romantic-historical *Troy Book,* a metrical translation of the *Historia Trojana* of Guido delle Colonne (done by command of Prince Hal), *The Story of Thebes,* a transcript from a French rendering of Statius, and *Guy of Warwick*; later, in more didactic and religious mood, a *Dance of Macabre, The Falls of Princes,* after Boccaccio's *De Casibus Illustrium Virorum* (the behest of the book-loving Duke Humphrey), and a verse-translation of the *first* part of Deguileville's *Pèlerinage de la Vie Humaine*; still later, shorter legends and fables, till death overtook him in his final drudgery of translating the *Secreta Secretorum.* Imbedded in this mass, running to tens of thousands of lines, are some shorter pieces of the prologue or the 'envoy' type, and these, with a collection of occasional exercises for the most part personal in character and prob-

ably written in the intervals of translation, complete the tale of Lydgate's work. In the last and in *The Temple of Glass*, perhaps the best accomplished of his work, we have the fullest evidence for an appreciation of his literary craft. In the setting of the *Story of Thebes* he forces an unflattering contrast with the *Canterbury Tales*; in the others, of which the *Falls of Princes* is rhythmically the least jarring, he wearily repoints the mediæval moral to human folly.

The Temple of Glass.

The *Temple of Glass*[1] represents the pure allegorical side of the late Middle Ages. The intellectual energy of that time expresses itself, broadly speaking, in one of two ways, either in the old allegorical dreaming of Chivalrous Love, or in the more 'rational' and satirical treatment of the actualities of contemporary life. These two moods re-express, with more or less amplification, the double and contradictory spiritual purpose which the Middle Ages had discovered in the *Roman de la Rose*. Jean de Meun had continued the literary form of Lorris, but his continuation was a direct criticism of the ideal Court of Love which filled his dream. That this antithesis, which subsequent literature clearly recognised, should have been presented as the continuation and completion of the Lorrisian allegory is one of those mediæval mannerisms which amuse the modern mind; but it may, for this very reason, be of greater literary importance as an historical hint of the coming intellectual restlessness. In England, later, this differentiation was

The influence of the Roman de la Rose.

[1] For a long time erroneously attributed to Stephen Hawes.

well marked. We find Chaucer, the student and translator of the *Rose*, in courteous sympathy with the new criticism of the *Cours d'Amour*, nowhere more obviously or more pleasantly than in his *Legend of Good Women*, his gentle would-be apology for the unconventionality of his *Troilus*. Chaucer's "heresye" was a powerful support to the forces of disintegration, for the tone in the fifteenth century, so madly allegorical, was increasingly antipathetic to the fantastic Love idealism. The taste grew for the personal, the moral, the satirical, the dramatic allegory, and only at times reverted to the other, either as a sort of relief in archaism or, as was more often the case, as the more familiar and easy exercise for mediocre minds. The *Temple of Glass*, the *Court of Love*, and the *Kingis Quair* are the best examples of this dying poetic tradition. Of the second we shall not speak[1]; to the third, which stands somewhat apart by reason of its more modern personal pathos, we shall return in the second chapter.

The difference between *The Temple of Glass* and the thirteenth century masterpiece is really one of degree, of the spirit rather than of the letter. For in all outward obedience to Dame Venus and in the literary courtesies which she required Lydgate is punctilious enough. The stock 'scenery' of the *Rose* is set anew: the opening landscape (this time, as with Gavin Douglas, a dreary waste, instead of pleasant

[1] *Ante*, p. 5. The less "chivalric" tone of the poem might be adduced as an argument for dating it later than Chaucer, but this and some obvious counter-arguments we are precluded from discussing.

meadow-land); the gate through which the poet is to pass to the Temple, as he does in the *Complaint of the Black Knight;* the walls of the House Beautiful decorated with the 'precedents' of Love's sorrows; all these and other details which Chaucer had already reproduced or suggested. That the poet should conclude the dream with a ballade in honour of the Goddess and should resolve to be the champion of the sex is of course of the very essence of the allegory; but it meant something more to Lydgate and his contemporaries. Ever since Jean de Meun's impolite treatment of the ladies, Chivalry had been entering protests, and most emphatically at this very time, when a Frenchwoman, Christine de Pisan, had raised a pretty quarrel over the slanderer's statements. The old monk once forgot himself in this matter,[1] but he made ample literary amends, elsewhere than in his *Temple of Glass*, to the "floures of curtesye."[2] This chivalrous emphasis in Lydgate, Occleve, and even to some extent in Hawes, may appear childish, but it is of deep significance as indicating that the crisis had come in the mediæval soul and that a change was at hand. For to tolerate plain speaking about women, of whom Our Lady was the chiefest and fairest, was to open the way for all manner of literary heresy. It will be found that

[1] See the Oxford *Chaucer*, vii. 295. There was, of course, the gentler model set by Chaucer in *Against Women Unconstant*—if indeed that poem be by Chaucer. See also Lydgate's dialogue, *Mumming at Hertford*, in which he treats more fully of the "complaynte of the lewed housbandes" against their wives.

[2] *Ibid.*, Nos. 9, 10, 11. *Minor Poems*, pp. 129, 199, 220, &c.

when the more satirical *Renart* mood overcame that of the gentler *Rose* and passed into the modern spirit of the early Renaissance, the "new" poetry became almost wanton in its mockery of the ideals of the old Courts of Love.

Of Lydgate's minor poems *The Complaint of the Black Knight*[1] most nearly approaches Chaucer's verse in the matter of technique, and justifies, in some ways, the mistaken ascription of the poem to the Master. It is in the spirit of the *Temple of Glass*, and may be described as a finished study of one of the episodes in the greater *Rose* story. Its comparative shortness saves it from the dreariness which irritates the modern reader of his "histories" and legends. He manages his rhythm and his stanza better than we should expect; and, though he is, it is true, less dependent than Occleve and others on the 'aureate terms' so dear to the century, he has not retained that propriety of word and tone which characterises the work of Chaucer. The poets themselves hint at an important difference in their æsthetic intention. Chaucer says in his *House of Fame*—

Lydgate's relation to Chaucer.

> "Nat that I wilne, for maistrye,
> Here art poetical be shewed;
> But, for the rym is light and lewed,
> Yit make hit sumwhat agreable,
> Though som vers faile in a sillable;
> And that I do no diligence
> To shewe craft, but o sentence."[2]

[1] Oxford *Chaucer*, vii. 245-265. It seems to be modelled on the *Boke of the Duchesse*.

[2] ll. 1094-1100.

Lydgate, who may be suspected of imitating Chaucer in this critical parenthesis, honestly complains of his incompetence, and yet would prove his diligence,—

> "And trouthe of metre I sette also a-syde,
> For of that art I hadde as tho no guyde
> Me to reduce, whan I went a-wronge:
> I tooke none hede nouther of shorte nor longe."[1]

This would show that what with Chaucer, despite his severe instructions to scrivener Adam, was a minor care to his genius, was with Lydgate, despite his untiring practice, the chief sorrow of his talent. Though Lydgate's wearisome and tangled style is the expression of a personal incompetence, he had difficulties which did not vex Chaucer, and had some excuse when writing in a "comyn vulgare eke moost interupte."[2] For the content of this transition period is not only the strife of the "sentence" of the mediæval and the modern interests, but also of the "craft." And it is no critical whim to say that in the disorder and experiment of the latter English literature learned more than it did from the former, because, whereas the rise of the modern idea was inevitable, the facility of modern art could only be reached, even by genius, after long and hard discipline. Thus Lydgate's imperfect rhythm is historically interesting as showing how the poet tried to catch the flow of the French metre, and too often fell back on the jigging beats of the popular "tumbling verse."[3]

[1] *Troy-Book*, quoted by Schick, p. lvi.
[2] *Court of Sapience* (Prologue).
[3] Drs Schipper (*Eng. Metr.*, i. § 196) and Schick (*T. of Glas*, lvi,

The subject-matter of Lydgate's minor poems, like that of almost all the work of his contemporaries, may be divided into four classes. There is, first, the allegorical adoration of the Virgin and of the female sex generally, of which we have already spoken; secondly, the usual quantum of ephemeral verse on royal entries and processions, but chiefly on the emptiness of the poetic purse; thirdly, reflective and didactic verse, in a set of ballades and other poems complaining of the shortcomings of human conduct and of the fatal shroud which hangs over earthly endeavour; and lastly, a number of mildly satirical pieces, partly ephemeral, as on the forked head-dresses of the ladies, and partly on the enduring topic of the miseries of the law, on tittle-tattlers, on the contrariness of things in general which "as the crabbe gothe forwarde." His many pieces of religious verse, not of ecstatic adoration of the Virgin but for the most part of the legend type, hardly merit attention. The third and fourth classes introduce us to two intellectual moods which constantly recur throughout European literature during this period. In the former there is the regret that life is a failure, that "all stant in change like a mydsomer rose," that "it may wele ryme, but it accordith nought," that "Though I go loose, I tyed am with a line;"[1] but behind all is an ever-present thought, almost horror, of Death.

&c.) make much of Lydgate's claim (not his own, certainly) as a metrist. Yet the sum of their defence is that "if the metre is 'halting,' there is, as a rule, method in this halting."

[1] These are the burdens of some of Lydgate's poems. See Halliwell, pp. 22, 55, 74.

The coming Renaissance, strongly dominated by an intellectual cynicism, accepted the idea of finality in a more fatalistic mood, and contemplated it with an almost pleasing melancholy. To the fifteenth century it was neither Fate nor Kismet, but a veritable spectre which frighted the souls even of the good. The hobgoblins of the Dance of Death and Death himself were allegorised into realities impossible to earlier generations; or, rather, the stern realities in the national experience—the devastations of the Plague, and the horrors of long war, in France especially — infected the popular imagination, and held it terror-stricken. The early Middle Ages had looked upon Death as a corruption, and, in their most materialistic mood, had pictured it as a wasting, worm-coiled body, such as we have in the early *Visions* or Homilies like *Soul's Ward*, and may still see in the sculpture on the tomb in the Elisabeth Church in Marburg.[1] Towards the close of the Middle Ages the idea is changed; the image is a skeleton, stripped of the tatters of the charnel-house, the grim active horror of the *Danse Macabre*. Such extravagance indicates an imminent crisis in the allegorical mood;[2] just as it is by reason of the sud-

The conception of death.

[1] Though the fifteenth century in its zest for realism was loath to lose such a pet horror—as for example in a *canzone* of Andrea da Basso on the Herodian torments of a heartless beauty.

[2] In the allegorical alliterative poem *Death and Life*, preserved in the Percy *Folio*, Death (a woman), "one of the uglyest ghosts," "long and lean," is described in gruesome detail. If the poem be, as the editors of the *Folio* premise, by the author of the *Scotish Feilde*, it probably falls within our period. As an allegory, in the alliterative style, it is obviously a *pastiche* of *Piers the Plowman*.

den intensity of the nightmare that we start from our dreams to the comforts of the ordinary world, and, with the valour of the morning, smile at the fiction. The very exuberance of the close of the Middle Ages, the cynical defiance in the enjoyment of life was but the expression of relief from this terror, an expression the more intense because the mediæval spirit was about to suffer change. To Lydgate and Occleve and to the fuller-blooded poets of the North, Death dogs the Muse as a villain in the dark. When Dan John sees Death in his dream, he says—

> "For feere I lookyd as blak as a coole.
> I wold haue cropyn in a mouse hoole."[1]

Timor mortis conturbat me is the refrain of the century.[2] Further, it is to be noted, that with the change in the conception of Death there came a change in the literary purpose, from the homiletic to the satirical. The masquerading skeletons showed the paltriness of humanity rather than the solemn failure of man's ambition; just as the Fools, who crowd the literature of the same period, are the satirist's reminder of the worthlessness of human action.

The traditional association of Thomas Occleve, or Hoccleve (?1370-?1450), with Lydgate is both historically and critically justifiable. They were con-

[1] *Assembly of Gods*, st. 279.

[2] With canonical propriety the pen of the aged Monk of Bury failed him as he wrote the line—

> "Deth al consumyd, which may not be denied."

"Here dyed this translator and nobyl poete," adds his disciple Benedict Burgh.

temporaries, their literary atmosphere was the same,[1] and their work affords contrasts not in æsthetic *motif* but only in personal aptitude. Occleve, thanks to his bad-boy confessions and Dr Furnivall's racy account thereof,[2] has received more attention than his abler fellow-poet. It is just possible that biography has overshot the mark in its interpretation of the *Male Regle*, and that criticism, over-busy in these amusing digressions, has given too ready assent to the assumptions of older historians.

Thomas Occleve.

Occleve's discipleship to Chaucer is even more professed than Lydgate's, and there would seem to be evidence that he had submitted his exercises to the Master.

> "And fadir Chaucer fayne wolde have me taught
> But I was dul, and lerned lite or naught."[3]

This honest "dul" of his, and the "fordulled" which Lydgate applied to his own wearied wits, help us to a rough-and-ready, yet just, comparison of the poets; for whereas the Monk of Bury might have written better, had he had less facility and less exacting patrons, Occleve, despite his ample leisure, could never have dreamt himself out of a respectable mediocrity. In the matter of technique he is in many respects inferior to the maculate Lydgate, for though his metre shows considerable

Compared with Lydgate.

[1] "He wrote in Chaucer's time," Browne's *Shepherd's Pipe* (1614).

[2] *Hoccleve's Works, I., The Minor Poems.* Ed. Furnivall (E.E.T.S., 1892).

[3] *De Regimine Principum*, st. 297. The remark however may be a mere figure.

ease, it is marred by wanton accentuation.[1] Yet, if there be small pleasure to be had from this jolting verse, there is the pathological interest of the inability of the changing medium to yield the music of which Chaucer in rather happier circumstance and by dint of genius proved himself the master. Occleve is in form professedly Chaucerian, and most strongly so within the narrow limits of the seven- and eight-lined stanzas; but the cadence of his *Letter of Cupid* or his *Mother of God* is not that of his model, but "unconningly metrid"—to quote his plaint of his insufficiency.[2]

If we accept his further admission that his "sentence" is "raw," it must not be by comparison, for he is not more wearisome and unoriginal than his fellows. His poems, both in subject and in intention, group themselves under the same heads as in the case of Lydgate. The chivalrous allegory is represented by the *Letter of Cupid*, where, in the borrowed lines of Christine de Pisan,[3] he discourses of cruel man, and of "feythful woman, ful of innocence," who is not to blame for the evil which delighted the literary soul of Jean de Meun. Sad to tell, the poet elsewhere complains that the fickle fair had misconstrued his defence; and he had to supplement, in the *Tale of the Wife of Jeraslaus*, his well-intentioned thesis. As in

[1] Professor Ten Brink found in Occleve "a decided talent for form," and a nearer approximation to "the great model than any of the poets of the fifteenth century" (ii. 215, Eng. edit.) In some parts of the *De Regimine* he certainly shows a metrical facility; but his luck is rare.

[2] *Works* (E.E.T.S.), p. 57. [3] Her *Epistre au Dieu d'Amours*.

the case of Lydgate, his religious verse is coloured by this allegory, notably in the *Mother of God*, once attributed to Chaucer, and, for that reason perhaps, considered to be his best piece. His chivalric emphasis tempts him further than Lydgate, and bids him champion Mother Church against the disloyalty of the Oldcastles[1] and the lingering communism of the Peasants' Revolt. Though he has given this picture of love ideal and love divine, he appeals to us most in the plain tale of the *Male Regle*, where he invokes the

"Erthely god, piler of lyf, thow helthe,"

and points the moral of a misspent youth from the experiences of a London scapegrace. It is probable, as I have already hinted, that Occleve was more of a 'literary' than an actual rake,—the biographical interpretation is of small import,—and that the *Male Regle* is but one of the many studies of *fautes de jeunesse* which pleased a moralising age. The young monk[2] was not the first to steal apples, nor the young Government clerk kisses, and it is rather forcing criticism to see, in facts such as these, hints of the personal quality which characterises the literary reaction of a later period. I doubt not that if a complete study were made of these "anticipations," even as late as Gavin Douglas, we should find that they were rather more conventional and rhetorical,

The conventional basis of the non-allegorical verse.

[1] See the poem on *Oldcastle* (E.E.T.S., pp. 8-24) and the *Balades* (Oxford *Chaucer*, vii. 233-235).

[2] See Lydgate's *Testament*.

and of a pattern, than individual. It is one thing to admit that a mediæval poet was human, another that he was able to express his humanity in an unmediæval way. I am willing to be committed to the paradox that the ephemeral verse of the period was as conventional as its allegory, and, if further proof were necessary, I would refer to that unending plaint of the Empty Purse (of which Occleve too, has left not a few verses) which, though addressed by this and that poet to this or that prince, and verified by the searchers of records, was but one of the literary mannerisms of a prescribed art. Even in Occleve's *Complaint* and in his *Dialog* there is obviously much of that pen-melancholy which we find expressed and re-expressed in scores of "Complaints" and "Laments." His most didactic effort is the long *Governail of Princes*,[1] a pot-pourri, for the benefit of Prince Hal, of the *De Regimine Principum* of Ægidius, the *Secreta Secretorum* (one of Lydgate's tasks), and the chess-allegory of Cassolis (the later care of Caxton). The long proem has saved this tedious transcription from oblivion by reason of those more gossipy qualities of the kind which has commended the *Male Regle*, and by the now familiar lines to the memory of Chaucer, the "mirrour of fructuous entendement." It reminds us, in its general tone, of the 'moral Gower,' and, more particularly in the stanzas on that "precious jewelle" Peace, of his last English poem *In Praise of Peace*.[2] In his gloomy

[1] Ed. Wright (Roxburghe Club, 1860).

[2] The Oxford *Chaucer*, vii. 205.

moods he harks back with Lydgate to the horrid presence of Death,[1] and, like him, warns his age of the grim intent of

> "That combre-worlde, that the my maister slowe
> (Wolde I slayne were) dethe was to hastyf
> To renne on the, and revë the thy lyf."[2]

Lydgate and Occleve sum up the poetic mood of the early fifteenth century in England. When, after a weary interregnum, the imagination begins to revive in the closing years of the century, it respectfully turns to the Court allegory and re-expresses in the verse of Hawes the formalities of a dying fashion. This, as we shall see, is only one phase, and not the chief, of its energies, but it completes the poetic unity of a century which was growing restless in the Skeltonian way, and it explains, by its very modifications of the older manner, the coming of the *Faerie Queene*.

The middle century.

The middle century is in reality an interregnum. The writers are not few, for there was many a quiet monastic nook for the dilettante who had no stomach for fighting. Political turmoil is sometimes urged as a reason for the poetical inanition of certain periods; but it would not be difficult to disprove this in cases when the distractions were of a less happy-go-lucky kind than they were during the Wars of the Roses. In one respect they may have acted as a drag, in their interruption of the patronage which did so much for early letters, though to the Lydgates this would have come

[1] He translated the *Scito Mori*.

[2] *Governail of Princes*.

as a respite. The poetical intention and the personal capacity were weaker. The poetic remains of this period, which are not in Latin or are not painful translations from the Latin or French, are the very dregs of pedagogic moralising—such weary reiterations on religious and moral duty as we find in the pages of Thomas Brampton, William of Nassyngton, John Audelay, George Asby, and Benedict Burgh, the continuator of Lydgate,[1] or in spiritless chronicles in rhyme like that of the soldier John Harding.[2] But there are a few poems, if we exclude the ballads,[3] which make some apology for the decadence. These, curiously enough, are the doubtful pieces which have been persistently attributed to Chaucer. Indeed this attribution by the scribes and early editors, wrong-headed though it may be, is at least evidence of a critical appreciation, and implies a rather happy faculty of discrimination.[4] The further exercise of this faculty has been reserved for our own day, when editors, with a zeal worthy of the warring Roses, have marched and countermarched, spoiled and portioned anew the old Chaucerian demesne. The fifteenth century emerges the gainer, for though the sixteenth is to have the *Court of Love*,[5] it obtains the *Flower*

[1] The *Plowman's Crede* and *Tale*, in the same category, may be of this epoch ; but they seem to show the spirit of the older Piers.

[2] Down to the reign of Edward IV. It was continued, in prose, by Richard Grafton.

[3] See chap. vi.

[4] These pieces will be found in the Oxford *Chaucer*, vii.

[5] *Ante*, p. 5. See the Oxford *Chaucer*, vii., for an account of the authorship of these poems.

and the Leaf (by a nameless lady), *The Assembly of Ladies* (by the same), *The Cuckoo and the Nightingale* (by Thomas Clanvowe), and *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* (by Richard Ros), and not a little else of valuable possession which will further remove from it the shame of poverty. In some of the details, such as the authorship of *Merciles Beauté*, the skirmishing is not yet at an end; but from such controversy the present volume is necessarily debarred. Acceptance or refusal of one or more of these philological conclusions will in no way affect the general impression. Scogan's lament on his "mispent juventé," Walton's grumbling at prosperity, Ros's transcription of Chartier's love-plaint, and Clanvowe's laud of love against the cynicism of the Cuckoo (*alias*, perhaps, Jean de Meun) are but further exemplification of the Chaucerian habit; and if the best of the supplementary pieces are only Chaucerian and not Chaucer's, there is the interesting fact of an author or authors of genius, often hardly inferior to the master, so dominated by the poetic of the age as to lose the characteristics of individuality which the very pre-eminence implies. The metrical ease of *La Belle Dame sans Mercy* and the *Cuckoo and the Nightingale*, not to speak of the *Flower and the Leaf* and *Assembly of Ladies*, is a perplexing pleasure in the record of the verse-decay of the century.[1]

The "Chaucerian" pieces.

[1] They have the adventitious interest of having attracted Milton, Dryden, and Wordsworth. The *Cuckoo and the Nightingale* recalls, in some ways, the older poem of Nicholas de Guildford.

With the close of the century comes the *Pastyme of Pleasure*[1] of Stephen Hawes (*d.* ? 1523), who may deserve many of the hard things which Scott and others said of him, but who is of intense interest to the *Tendenz* historian. In metre he is poor indeed, in poetic insight, except in a few beautiful and well-known passages, he is dull, and in constructive power he shows but mediocre faculty; but in historical position, in his relation to the earlier allegorical mood of the century and to the later mood of the *Faerie Queene* he is all important. He does not give mere formal thanks to the "prudent Gower" and the "noble Chawser," to whom, with emphatic reiteration, he adds the "vertuous Lydgat moche sentencyous"; but, æsthetically, he completes the allegorical succession. Mrs Browning in her random but kindly *Book of the Poets* facetiously asked, "Is Hawes a swan—a black (letter) swan?" Certainly a swan, if, in her continued figure, Barclay and Skelton are of that feather; and more so, if the 'dying note' have any metaphorical value. For though Hawes himself had not the surpassing sweetness, his work had all the tragic interest which attaches to the fact that in him mediæval allegory sang its last courtly note, and it marks the ending of a poetic mood and of a literary manner which were the natural expression of its time. Henceforth all attempts to revive this chivalric dream betray the marks of affectation. The *Faerie Queene* and its circle are a recognised development, but they show very important and essen-

Stephen Hawes.

His allegorical position.

[1] Ed. Wright (Percy Society). Its date is probably 1505-6.

tial modifications. The *motif* and quality are changed; and however delightfully, in idea or in language, they reproduce the old courtly allegory, we feel that the result is a mannerism, a pastiche, an archaic trickery. Now the *Pastyme of Pleasure*, though it is on the marge of the New, is yet directly and chiefly in touch with the Old. It is the ending of the day, "the belle that ringeth to evensong," rather than the expectance of the morrow; and it is in this twilight that we can best catch the rarer hues of those passing literary ideals and forms while they are yet vivid and actual to their time. The story of Grand Amour and Bel Pucell is not yet a mere quaintness: the poet is inspired by the *Temple of Glass*, and repeats the scholastic lesson of Capella; his Gobelive retells the familiar slanders against women; he rewhirls his Wheel of Fortune and describes again the glories of the Temple—as had been done since the days of the *Roman de la Rose*.[1] Some have found in him "the first articulate prophecy" of the Renaissance,[2] especially in the 'hope' of lines as these:—

> "Was never payne, but it had joy at last
> In the fayre morowe."

Perhaps this is uncritical, if it be not unfair to the mediæval soul. Hawes, we may admit, is a little less

[1] Cf. also his *Example of Virtue* (an analysis of which will be found in Morley's *English Writers*, vii. 75-81), and even the very dull *Conversyon of Swerers*.

[2] Ward's *Eng. Poets*, i. 176.

of his century in that the horrors of life are not so grim and real; but he has none of the restlessness which preluded the coming of the New Spirit and which was a necessary condition for its coming.

That restlessness we see in Skelton (? 1460-1529),[1] whom not a few, excusing his coarseness, would dismiss as the century's merry-andrew or the irresponsible 'sport' of an old but exhausted stock. Careful study may find something more in his eccentricities. Even in his most conventional pieces, where he continues the mediæval love of allegory, and uses the familiar seven-lined stanza, there are signs of innovation. For though there is allegory and a suggestion of the old manner in the *Bowge of Court*, the *Dethe of the Erle of Northumberland*, and *The Garland of Laurell*, there is nothing of that chivalrous intent which distinguished the old 'courtly' verse. In the *Bowge of Court* we see the tendency towards the dramatic form or 'pageant' allegory which indicates a vital change in the old poetic mood. Not only had the method of the dream-poem become tedious, but its very doctrine was provocative of criticism, which in the case of a man like Skelton would soon outpace the mere cynicism of Jean de Meun. The poet saw an opportunity for travesty in everything, even, as in *Philip Sparowe*, in the Church ritual.

John Skelton.

Perhaps too much may be made of Skelton's position as a direct exponent of the Renaissance. He had the temperament of the later scholars, not the mere uninformed fondness for cataloguing classical and medi-

[1] Ed. Dyce, 2 vols., 1843.

æval names in his poems. He had the reputation of being the translator of Cicero's Letters to his Friends and of Diodorus Siculus, and he was praised to extravagance by no less than Pico della Mirandola, Erasmus, and Caxton. "I suppose," says the last, "he hath dronken of Elycon's well,"[1] a metaphor which may stand, if we interpret it as showing the freshness and directness of his inspiration rather than as implying any enunciation of the strictly classical content of the Revival. Another contemporary more happily distinguishes Skelton from the "sentencious" Chaucer and Lydgate by the epithet "inventive."[2] It is his invention or personal emphasis, whether in sheer whimsicality or in biting satire, which marks his spiritual break with the past. In nothing is this more evident than in the triumphant egoism of the *Garland of Laurell*, a "ryght delectable tratyse" of sixteen hundred lines of self-glorification. He speaks rather condescendingly of Gower, Chaucer, and Lydgate, whom he introduces as conferring compliments and honour on himself—

> "Bycause that ye encrese and amplify
> The brutid Britons of Brutus Albion,
> That welny was loste when that we were gone."

There is ample evidence of that companion passion of the New Spirit, that "gran desio dell' eccellenza" which possessed the Italy of his day. Skelton has

[1] Skelton himself says that he gave Prince Henry "drynke of the sugryd well of Eliconys waters crystallyne" (Dyce, i. 129).

[2] Henry Bradshaw, *Lyfe of Saynt Werburghe*, ii. st. 24.

not only the craving for the gifts of Fame but a somewhat confident belief in an established approval of the Goddess. Chaucer sees the mysteries of the 'House of Fame' as a modest onlooker; he has no petition to present[1]; in his invocation to Apollo he says he will go to the first laurel which he sees and will kiss it.[2] Skelton, in superior mood, rambles through the famous Temple, exchanges courtesies with his predecessors, chats with 'Occupacyon,' who, as he tells us, ceremoniously presents him with a "cronell of laurell with verduris light and darke." The poet, to prove his quality, straightway proceeds to compliment in verse each of the ladies of her bevy. In other respects, and perhaps as a consequence of this individual sensitiveness and this thirst for fame, he is interestingly modern. His literary quarrels, which are not mere 'flytings,' associate him with the amenities of the Humanists. Even in the very excess of his satire and coarse raillery he gives evidence of a certain genuine critical capacity; for though he is an extremist in disposition,—as in his diatribes on the Scots and on Wolsey, and in his love of word-climax which is almost Rabelaisian,—his very incisiveness helps him at times rather happily. In his critique of the English Poets in *Philip Sparowe*, for example, he is strikingly original; and how

His intellectual confidence.

[1] *House of Fame*, iii. 781.

[2] Ib., 16. Dante, whom Chaucer had in mind, is less self-denying—

> "Venir vedraimi al tuo diletto legno,
> E coronarmi allor di quelle foglie,
> Chè la materia e tu mi farai degno" (*Paradiso*, i. 25-27).

better can we sum up Chaucer than he has done in the lines—

> "Pleasant, easy, and playne,
> No worde he wrote in vayne."[1]

This poem is his best, though perhaps not his most characteristic in the opinion of those who think only of the doggerel of his satires and the unsavouriness of his ale-wife Muse. It has all the qualities, though not the coarseness, of his other satirical work; yet it is pervaded by a subtle and irresponsible humour which may recall the whimsicalities of such as Villon or Dunbar or Rabelais, but which is, and must be, by its very nature, unique and individual, and, though not imaginative in the highest and most serious sense, is none the less poetic. Here again is a contrast with Chaucer; for whereas the older writer is least a poet when he is the most delightful of humourists, his rougher successor is urged to his highest efforts of imagination by a wayward fancy. I suggest no comparison with Chaucer; but there is in Skelton's skimble-skamble that peculiar elfin quality which belongs to the highest romantic genius.[2] In the individual intensity of this fantasy, as of his rough-and-tumble satire and of his descriptive passages generally,[3] there is small scope for tradition. Indeed his work is almost a conscious protest against the old;

His imagination and formal originality.

[1] ll. 802, 803.

[2] Cf. Dunbar, *infra*.

[3] *E.g.*, the sewing-party in *The Garland of Laurell;* which, by the way, should prove, according to the canon of some Chaucer critics, that the poem was written by a woman!

or rather it is anarchical, for he has not, and does not care to have, any new poetic to take its place. The most tangible expression of his rebellion is in the verse form. The term 'Skeltonical' has been handed down as signifying mere doggerel, or any medley of metre which is irreducible to academic rule. Yet no one would assert that it is the formlessness of incompetence, or, on the other hand, that it is premeditated like the burlesque oddity of Samuel Butler. Verse-technique was in a perilous condition amid the confusion of a changing pronunciation, of varied accentual values, of renewed experiments in the discredited alliteration, and of uncertain practice in the more honoured decasyllable. Had Skelton been a propagandist he could not have found a better opportunity; but he was in no mood for fetters, even of his own making. The temptation to metrical licence even affected the conventional Hawes, who in a passage in his *Conversyon of Swerers* varies his lines from one to six syllables. The result of this artistic apathy of the poet and of this chaotic state of the art could not well be otherwise than it was. He several times hits on a happy harmony as in his ballads and ditties or in his rollicking travesties of the old alliteration,—as elsewhere he shows, in *Woffully araid* and *Now synge we,* how easily the 'Skeltonical' could become discordant and inappropriate.[1]

Skelton's contemporary Alexander Barclay (?1475-?1552) has had a fair share of editorial attention, though, it must be confessed, for rather adventitious

[1] For his dramatic work see p. 290.

reasons. He might well be passed by in this book, were the knotty question of his nationality or the details of his quarrel with the "graduate of stinking Thais" the only matters of interest; but, dull dog as he is, he helps us, as naïve mediocrity will, to a few facts of comparative value.

Alexander Barclay.

His best poetic work is his *Eclogues*, composed "in his youth."[1] His better known *Ship of Fools*, to which we shall return,[2] is, even in its original portions, a rather slow-witted effort; and his *Mirror of Good Manners* and his *Castle of Labour* are translations from the Latin and the French. He has been called "the last of the purely mediæval English allegorists,"[3] and he is more familiarly known as the first English pastoralist. Both views are rather vague and to some extent erroneous. Mediæval allegory, of the ideal or *Rose* type, expired, as we have seen, with Hawes,—to be revived in very changed conditions in the *Faerie Queene*. The allegorical manner continued, but it was more and more confined to the expression of the satirical, and, in regard to form, to the dramatic rather than to the epical. Barclay's allegory shows, in two ways at least, an essential contrast with true mediæval art. The spirit of his originals—the *Miseriae Curialium* of Æneas Sylvius and the *Eclogues* of Mantuan—is a moody satire of sin and uncharitableness in high places, thinly disguised in the disputations of an artificial Arcady.

[1] Ed. Fairholt (Percy Society).

[2] See chap. v., p. 178.

[3] Mr Courthope's *English Poetry*, i. 386.

Barclay's version is little more than a translation; his Codrus and Menalcas complain in English of the cruelty of the "riche men agaynst poets," and Cornix denounces the "Court" to the simple Corydon. The allegory is a mere accident and not of the essence of the conception. Further, Barclay's adoption of the Continental eclogue links him with the Renaissance. His relation with mediævalism is entirely from the outside, and all that can be said of him in this respect is that he endeavoured to galvanise a moribund art by the aid of the classical pastoral, which in the modified form of Mantuan and his contemporaries was the antithesis of the courtly dreaming. The fact too that the *Eclogues* are so uncourtly, and so fond of the moral, makes them sort rather with the *bourgeois* sentiment of the early Renaissance. If we accept the statement that he is our first pastoralist, it must be in the restricted sense that he is the first English poet who disclosed the formal beauty of that foreign shepherd-land which the Modern Spirit had discovered in its own scholarly fancy, and in which it would find solace from the turmoil of its later fervours. It is a short step from the *Eclogues* to the *Shepherds Calendar*. Marot inspired Spenser as Mantuan inspired Barclay; the results were similar, though they differed in poetic intensity. Parallelism in detail, such as between the good Alcock of the one and the good Algrind of the other, may or may not count for much; but in their almost puritanical intention Barclay's verses anticipate and explain the purpose of the

His allegory not essential.

As a pastoralist.

'New Poet.' There is this difference between Hawes and Barclay in the progress of their art towards Spenser, that while on the former there rests a glamour of the past, in the latter we are waiting, with a vague expectancy, for that which is to usurp the place of an outworn ideal.

Outside the great body of English verse of the allegorical type stand a few sorry remnants of Romance. They are, as a whole, of poor account as literature, and are mere *rechauffés* of old material. We shall see in subsequent chapters[1] that the metrical Romance had already yielded to other forms, and that its inanition in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was the inevitable result of that transformation. Most, and the best, of its efforts are concerned with Arthurian story, in dying recollection of days of greater account. One Thomas Chestre, of the reign of Henry VI., made a version of the tale of Sir Launfal from the fifth Lay of Marie of France. This poem,[2] in the Sir Thopas metre, is the most favourable example of fifteenth-century romance, comparing to advantage with the version in the Percy Folio, which is probably a later rendering of a still earlier copy. It has some of the freshness and pictorial vivacity—as in the meeting of the knight in the wood with the fairy Lady Triamond—which reappears occasionally in pieces like Lyndsay's *Squyre Meldrum*. Chestre's contemporary Herry Lonelich, an ambitious skinner, who has left a *Merlin*[3] and a

The remnants of Romance.

[1] Chaps. vi. and x.

[2] Ritson's *Metrical Romanceës*, i. 170.

[3] Not edited: a portion is given in Kölbing's *Arthour and Merlin*.

Holy Grail,[1] is the fellow in sheer literary ineptitude of the legend-monger Osbern of Bokenham.[2] His *Holy Grail* is as far below either of the anonymous versions of the *Morte Arthur* as Malory's prose epic is above them.[3] Other pieces like the second version of *Guy of Warwick*,[4] *Generydes*,[5] *Torrent of Portugal*,[6] or *The Vision of Tundale*[7] have only the historical interest of examples which show the transformation of the spirit and form of the old Romance.

[1] Ed. Furnivall, E.E.T.S., 1874-8.

[2] Ed. Hortsmann. Heilbronn, 1883.

[3] See chap. x.

[4] Ed. Zupitza, Lond., 1875.

[5] Ed. Wright, E.E.T.S., 1878. An earlier version in couplets of four accents is extant in the Helmingham MS. (*c.* 1430-50), ed. Dr Furnivall (Roxburghe Club, 1865).

[6] See chap. vi. p. 194.

[7] Ed. Turnbull, Edin., 1843. See A. Wagner, *Das Mittelenglische Gedicht ueber die Vision des Tundalus* (Halle, 1893). On the relation of this elaborated 'Vision' to other mediæval works, see Mr Ernest Becker's Dissertation on the *Medieval Visions of Heaven and Hell* (Baltimore, 1899).

CHAPTER II.

THE SCOTTISH POETS.

THE CHAUCERIAN INFLUENCE: ITS LATENESS—THE LITERATURE OF PREPARATION — THE PATRIOTIC INDIFFERENCE — (A) THE ALLEGORICAL AND CHAUCERIAN TRADITION; (B) THE ALLITERATIVE TRADITION—JAMES I., KING OF SCOTS—THE 'KINGIS QUAIR'—THE "LITERARY" CHARACTER OF SCOTS ALLEGORY—ROBERT HENRYSON: HIS USE OF THE "MORAL" — THE PICTORIAL QUALITY IN SCOTS VERSE—THE 'TESTAMENT OF CRESSEID'—THE PASTORAL IDEA—THE COURT OF JAMES IV.—WILLIAM DUNBAR: HIS LITERARY INTENTION: HIS TECHNICAL VARIETY: HIS IRREPRESSIBLE HUMOUR: HIS ARTISTIC RANGE—GAVIN DOUGLAS: ESSENTIALLY MEDIÆVAL—SIR DAVID LYNDSAY: THE THEOLOGICAL RENAISSANCE: HIS FORMAL DEBT TO THE PAST: HIS SERIOUSNESS AND ACTUALITY: HIS POETIC RESTRICTIONS: HIS METRICAL FACILITY—THE MINOR MAKARIS—AN HISTORICAL MISCONCEPTION — THE POOR QUALITY OF THE MINOR VERSE—WALTER KENNEDY AND QUINTYNE SCHAW—THE ALLITERATIVE VERSE — 'RAUF COILȝEAR' — THE 'BUKE OF THE HOWLAT' — THE FUNCTION OF THE BELATED ALLITERATIVE VERSE—OTHER POPULAR PIECES — 'CHRISTIS KIRK ON THE GRENE' AND 'PEBLIS TO THE PLAY'—RUSTIC BURLESQUES—GAELIC REMAINS.

BETWEEN the work of the English poets and that of their Scottish contemporaries a time-honoured contrast has been drawn, which, notwithstanding the occasional emphasis of a perfervid patriotism, is, generally speak-

ing, just. It must be confessed that the comparison has too often been made from an uncritical standpoint, and, further, that the late Mr Russell Lowell's anathema against the antiquaries and philologers—who even now obscure the æsthetic issues—was not altogether wanton. But his irritation at "quhissill" and "bowgill" for plain "whistle" and "bugle," and his confessed inability to unravel Middle Scots, disprove the authority of his sarcastic conclusions. I doubt if much is to be gained for historical criticism by a comparison of the national efforts, and certainly nothing, unless a moment's amusement, when the critic judges between Gavin Douglas and Longfellow.[1] It is more profitable, and more to our purpose, to confine ourselves to the *milieu* of Chaucer and of the early Renaissance.

The Chaucerian influence: its lateness.

Whereas in England the fifteenth century drew from the first from the Chaucerian tradition, in Scotland it was not till the middle century, long after James I.'s solitary endeavour, that the influence of Chaucer was established. At the dawn of the century Scottish literature was inchoate; for besides the doubtful Thomas of the thirteenth century, and the anonymous alliterative writers in the next, there are no writers till we come to Barbour, Hucheoun, and Fordun at the very close of the fourteenth century. Political circumstances may to some extent explain this delay. It was not till the early thirteenth century that a national literature was possible, for

[1] See the Essay on Spenser in *The English Poets*.

the intellectual life of the English-speaking Lowlands had been that of old Northumbria, and was incapable of amalgamation with that of the great body of alien Celts to the North and West. It suffered with Southern Northumbria the depression which had followed on the havoc of the Danes. When, in the reign of Alexander III., "that Scotland led in luwe and le," the natural spirit was ripe for literary expression, there were as yet no models in the south, to which perforce it must turn. It might, in a more restricted way, have attained some positive result, through a chaos of experiment similar to what we find in England, but the turmoils of the War of Independence intervened. And though the silence is broken at the end of the fourteenth century, and though during the fifteenth the pent-up fancy at last finds its full expression, it is not till the close of this century, and almost in the wane of this exuberance, that the characteristics of a truly national Scottish poetry appear.

The literature of preparation.

The content of what we may call the literature of preparation was largely determined by these restricted conditions. Their most complete expression is in the work of John Barbour, the "father of Scots Poesy," and notably in his long poem on the Bruce.[1] This piece is of epical cast, for, though formally it is kin with the romances and is chivalric rather than heroic in sentiment, yet like

[1] Ed. Skeat, E.E.T.S. and (revised) S.T.S. The Legends and Troy fragments ascribed to Barbour are edited by Horstmann (Heilbronn 1881-82).

the epopee it confines itself (through at least two-thirds of its length) to the narrow limits of national story, to the speech and answer of the warriors, to mere adventure and hand-to-hand encounter, to a plain seriousness entirely unrelieved by the extravagance of romantic fancy. The old northern love of romance had not died out, as is proved by the copying and recopying of portions of the great Cycles and of the Legends of Saints, such as have been ascribed to Barbour himself; but the liking for the historical and epical was stronger. On the threshold of the century there is but the mysterious Hucheoun "of the Awle Ryale"[1] to represent the romantic type; while the other writers of repute are akin in literary intention to Barbour, the author also of a lost *Stewartis Oryginal* and *The Brut*—to wit, Fordun, who wrote the *Scotichronicon*, Wyntoun, who left an *Oryginall Cronykil* in the metre of the *Brus*, Bower, the continuator of Fordun's book, and even Henry the Minstrel,[2] who wrote the *Wallace*, as late as 1460. In

The patriotic indifference.

all these pieces, with the exception perhaps of the last, the patriotic appeal to history is in general terms, as yet untouched, in any serious way, by the narrowness, provincialism, and unnecessary personalities of later Scots literature. This is the more remarkable at a time which was really the crisis of Scottish nationality; as it is also remarkable that it is Henry the Minstrel, a writer

[1] Trautmann, *Anglia*, i. 109; and *Scottish Alliterative Poems*, ed. Amours (S.T.S.)

[2] Ed. Moir (S.T.S.)

farthest from the turmoil, who first interrupts the historical calm of the chroniclers, and makes good in partisan emphasis what he loses in accuracy. Moreover, it is curious that this patriotic vein, which is accepted as a characteristic of Scottish literature taken as a whole, is not found during the remainder of the century and that portion of the next which constitute what has been called the "Golden Age of Scottish Poetry." Not only is there no minstrel to laud the nation by a comparison with her neighbours, but none to give direct expression, except in the most perfunctory manner,[1] to the high pulse of national life. It is only when we come to the prose of the plagiarised *Complaynt of Scotlande* that we find something of the *timbre* of the later voice of Scotticism.

(a) The allegorical and Chaucerian tradition.

All the verse of the fifteenth century, excluding the expression of this preliminary and short-lived liking for national exploits, falls under one or other of two varieties, in some respects the æsthetic antitheses of each other. There is, on the one hand, the extensive range of what we may call the Chaucerian, whether in the allegory, in the *fabliau*, or in the minor varieties of ephemeral verse; and, on the other, a smaller but representative series of examples of alliterative romance and occasional verse continuing the character and form of Hucheoun's fourteenth-century *Pistill of Susan* and the *Awntyrs of Arthure*. The former begins early

[1] As in the *Thrissill and the Rois* and in Lyndsay's conventional elegy on James IV.

in the century with the *Kingis Quair* and remains, (b) *The alliterative tradition.* though in modified form, the dominant phase throughout, reaching to a triumphant close in Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndsay; the other, the older, not reasserting itself till the mid-century in the *Buke of the Howlat*, and thereafter appearing but intermittently in Arthurian and Charlemagne romance and in some whimsical experiments by the Scottish Chaucerians.

The *Kingis Quair*[1] is an allegorical poem of the *Rose* type, such as Chaucer had popularised in the southern vernacular, and is of first importance alike in respect of its individual merit and of its historical position. It constitutes, together with a mediocre piece of three stanzas named *Good Counsel*, the only work of James I., King of Scots; for the *Song on Absence*, and the more renowned alliterative *Peblis to the Play* and *Christis Kirk on the Grene* can hardly be his, and the last two might well belong to the rollicking times of the 'Gudeman of Ballangeich.'[2] The *James I., King of Scots.* recent attempt to dispute the authorship of the *Quair* itself and to ascribe it to one of those anonymities to whom modern criticism does honour in the Temple of Fame, has but succeeded in establishing more securely the claim of the Poet-King.[3] Into this discussion we cannot enter, though

[1] Ed. Skeat (S.T.S., 1884). [2] See *infra*, p. 79.

[3] All that can be said for the case against James has been said by Mr J. T. T. Brown (*The Authorship of the Kingis Quair*, Glasgow, 1896). In direct answer to this, M. Jusserand has written

it would be more excusable than in many critical disputes of this kind, as the intense personal note of the poem, which distinguishes it from the ordinary allegorical type, obtains much of its significance from the very biographical fact. This characteristic, which is accompanied by a marked lyrical power, so individualises the poem, that the modern reader, not too familiar with the *Roman de la Rose* or the echoes thereof, might reasonably enough overestimate its originality. Yet it is both spiritually and formally a bloom of the same stem.[1] There is the 'dream' setting; the description of the spacious hall with its crowd of lovers—

> "quhois aventure and grete labouris
> Above thaire hedis writin there I fand" (st. 79);

the itinerary in which Cupid, Venus, and Minerva play their wonted parts; the lover's petition to the goddesses in proper form; Fortune and "her tolter quhele"; the exhortation

The Kingis Quair.

Jacques 1^er^. *d'Écosse fut-il poète? Étude sur l'authenticité du Cahier du Roi.* Paris, 1897 (reprinted from the *Revue historique*, vol. lxiv.) —a most masterly and complete refutation of Mr Brown's thesis. See also the lengthy correspondence in the *Athenæum*, July-Aug. 1896 and Dec. 1899, and Mr W. A. Neilson's Dissertation on *The Origins and Sources of the Court of Love* (Harvard, 1899), pp. 152-155, 235-237.

[1] Professor Skeat has just advanced reasons for believing that James is the author of the second part ('Fragment B') of the so-called Chaucerian translation of the *Romaunt of the Rose* (see *Athenæum*, July 22, 1899). This is indeed a reprisal which may disturb the sceptics of King James's literary reputation.

to true love and the warning against the world and deceitful men, concluding with a prayer—

> "For all the hertis dull,
> That lyven here in sleuth and Ignorance,
> *And has no curage at the rose to pull*" (st. 186).

Much of this might well have come direct from the old Romance, or be but the re-expression of the form and ornament which the later Middle Ages had borrowed and adapted to its own ends; but not a little of it, especially in the more allegorical portion, is an obvious transcription from Chaucer, Gower, and others. Thus the lover's sleeplessness and the picture of the garden and of the river-side recall the *Parlement of Foules*; there are echoes of passages in the *Troilus*, including, perhaps, the metaphor of the rudderless boat,—though that may have been suggested to the poet by his own experience; and even the critical episode, when the prisoner beholds the "freschest yonge flowre," is curiously kin to the description in the *Knight's Tale* of Palamoun's vision of the "fresshe Emelye." For further proof we have James's concluding stanza in which he commends his book to the *poems* of Chaucer.[1] This unusual manner of acknowledgment, if the text be not corrupt, is an interesting fact in the Chaucerian revival of which this poem is the prelude; for the discipleship of the Scottish poets of the fifteenth century was primarily literary,

[1] "Unto [the] Impnis of my maisteris dere,
Gowere and Chaucere. . . .
I recommend my buk in lynis sevin" (st. 197).

and the differences between their treatment of allegory and that by their English masters are due to this. I do not mean that in the interval of a century any marked tendency to archaism had developed, but that the North deliberately put itself to school and by a rhetorical, and somewhat bookish, discipline, rather than by a natural facility, reproduced, and at times improved upon, the models. This is, of course, less true of the *Kingis Quair*, on account of its early date and of the circumstance of the poet's life. Its lyrical intensity, which is its great merit, and in which some have been tempted to see too strong a hint of modernity, more truly links it to the older and fuller expression of the chivalric verse. The poet's perhaps critical interpretation of the words of the bell as an "illusion,"[1] just as his lines on liberty,[2] may sort better with later allegory or may suggest the later Scot; but such digressions rather enhance than detract from the poetic intention. Taken as a whole, the *Quair* illustrates in a striking way that propriety of idea and word which is Chaucer's chief claim to original genius, and, in one or two oft-quoted passages, it even rivals the art of the Master.[3]

The "literary" character of Scots allegory.

The *Kingis Quair* was written about 1423; it is not till well on in the second half of the century that we

[1] St. 12. [2] St. 27.

[3] "Beautee eneuch to mak a world to dote" (st. 47).

"For which sodayn abate, anon astert
The blude of all my body to my hert" (st. 40).

Compare the second with Chaucer's lines, *Knightes Tale*, 220, 221.

find the next examples of this literary style, in the works of Henryson, and immediately thereafter in the Makaris of the days of James IV. Robert Henryson (?1430-?1506) is not a voluminous writer, but his literary quality is high and well-sustained throughout; and in this respect he stands in marked contrast with the Southern allegorists. His subjects are theirs in kind: chivalric allegory, as in *The Bludy Serk; fabliau*, as in *Orpheus and Eurydice*, and in the *Testament of Cresseid*, an interesting 'continuation' of Chaucer's piece; minor didactic pieces on tattlers, age, the lack of wise men and true, the horrors of pestilence, and notably on death (in *The Ressoning betwixt Deth and Man*, and *The Thrie deid Powis*). To these must be added *Robene and Makyne*, a pastoral, and *The Fables of Esope*, which are more completely illustrative of the coming literary taste.[1] There is certainly a foretaste of the Renaissance in his choice of such a theme as Orpheus, in his transcription from Aesop, and in his fondness for pagan illustration; but the real divergence from the old ways is seen in his emphatic tendency to moralise his fancy and in the way he does it. He seldom neglects to point the moral of his poem in a stanza or two at the close: allegory of the type of the *Bludy Serk* is no longer complete without its explanatory tag; even the conclusion of *Cresseid*, though less formal, "monishes"; and the tale of *Orpheus and*

Robert Henryson.

His use of the "moral."

[1] Ed. Laing, 1865. For the Fables, see *Anglia*, viii. A critical edition of the complete works is announced by the Scottish Text Society.

Eurydice is interpreted in a long 'Moralitas' of over two hundred lines. His didactic mood is shown too in his frequent use, in his minor pieces, of the trick of the 'burden.' All this points to a declension in the spiritual force of allegory. It remains as a poetical form, but it is becoming no longer self-sustaining as a *motif*—as the mystical expression of the love-fervours of the Middle Ages. This change in its character does not necessarily imply a dulling of the poetic spirit, for it is most observable in the times of revival—in Scotland at the close of the century, and in a more advanced phase in the yet greater outburst in Elizabethan England. A comparison of Henryson with, say, Lydgate will show certain differences in the process of deterioration. If Henryson is even less in touch with the old allegory, he has at least a greater appreciation of its literary qualities; and so he escapes from the numbing dulness which settled down on English verse when the old inspiration failed. He is more moral than the 'moral' Gower, and never hesitates to expound his dreams in a way which even Lydgate, had he dreamt as successfully, would not have done; and yet he is less open to the charge of being a tiresome pedagogue masquerading as poet. Not only is the lesson kept apart from the allegory, but the allegory itself, which might have become a mere *pastiche*, is treated anew. This aptitude for the pictorial, which characterises the early Renaissance, begins to appear in Henryson. In a skilful way he makes use of the outworn machinery of the allegory; he treats it as a matter of technique and discovers

in it those possibilities of vivid effect which find their fullest expression in the processional panels of the Elizabethans. In other words, he and his contemporaries transform what was originally a mystical cult into a literary engine, and save it from the wreck of mere platitude and "profitable sayings" into which it tended to fall, and did fall, in the hands of Chaucer's English successors. It is this quality which gives his sketches a first-hand interest, whether it be in a description of a pastoral scene, of a grim giant, of a feeble old man, of a mouse, or of Saturn himself. It is notable that Henryson, in his first prologue to the Fables, emphasises the importance of the pictorial presentment of the moral purpose—

The pictorial quality in Scots verse.

> "Thocht fenzeit Fabillis of auld Poetrie,
> Be nocht all groundit upon treuth, yit than
> Thair polite termis of sweit Rhetorie
> Ar richt plesand unto the eir of man;
> And als the caus that thay first began
> Wes to repreif the haill misleving
> Of man, be figure of ane uther thing."

I suspect it is this quality, so remarkable henceforth in Scots literature, which has tempted a later criticism to discover throughout things Scottish a strong liking for colour and for natural description. I confess I find it difficult to prove any such monopoly. Some of this artistic energy may have been constitutional, but it was largely the direct result of literary effort which became a tradition within the narrow limits of the national poetry. And it was this very

interest in technique, this fondness for 'touching up,' which produced the eccentricities of the 'Flytings' and the parodies on older literary fashions, and probably, too, those experiments in verbal indecency in which the Makaris are unrivalled.

Henryson shows his literary intention most clearly (and he is also at his best) in the *Fables*, the *Testament of Cresseid*, and *Robene and Makyne*. The first two are deliberate. In the *Fables* he gives us, as hinted in the quotation above, a series of studies which are of the nature of experiments. So too, and in a more marked way, in his *Cresseid*, which he offers as a sequel to Chaucer's *Troilus*. In a certain sense it is a marring of the tragedy of Troilus's sorrow to add the story of the after-sufferings which came upon the inconstant Cresseid, but it is an interesting and successful plea for poetical justice. And it is certainly free, as far as the story of the "lipper" lady's misfortune is concerned, from the offence of having a too obvious purpose. It may be doubted whether the older allegorists would have so deliberately set themselves to humiliate a gentle, though fickle, dame: Chaucer's conclusion is certainly more canonical than critical. *Robene and Makyne* is not allegorical in treatment, but it may, not inappropriately, be mentioned here. It is the best known of Henryson's works — because it is our first pastoral of the spontaneous and non-classical type, because it is short and tempting to the anthologist, and because it is a good poem. It is in marked contrast with the stilted *Eclogues* of Barclay, as a dainty

The Testament of Cresseid.

The pastoral idea.

sketch of the perennially interesting humours of simple wooing. It is worth noting too that it is almost a 'sport' in Scottish literature, for we find nothing resembling it till we reach the *Gentle Shepherd*, which, however, shows in the main the characteristics of the classical stock. It is written in the ballad-metre, which Henryson uses again in the *Bludy Serk*. This is interesting in connection with the popularity of the ballad in this century: and we shall return to it in a later chapter.[1]

With the reign of the "redoubted roye" James IV. we enter on the classic period of Scots poetry. In some respects it illustrates a mere access of high spirits, in companionship with the sudden national and social exuberance — a kind of carnival before the Lenten sadness of the sixteenth century. It established no permanent æsthetic tradition in Scots literature which might have relieved the polemical seriousness of the dawn of the modern spirit. Its synchronism with the short-lived splendour of James's Court suggests some intimate connection between the social and literary energies then astir; and other evidences of interaction are patent. Though it is well to be chary of explaining poetry by such outside influences, the work of even an original genius like Dunbar shows in a special way the pressure of the times. The nation indulges in self-congratulation; the misfortune of minorities is over, the kingdom has taken its place in European politics, commercial success and naval prowess are assured, and

The Court of James IV.

[1] Chap. vi.

general comfort and luxury are greatly increased. All this, however, has little influence on the literature of the age. I have said above that it does not even inspire any patriotic verse, such as we find in the days of Queen Bess, where, notwithstanding the unstinted adulation of the "fayre Elisa," there is a distinct strain of national feeling. In Scotland, on the other hand, poetry was the expression of the narrower life of the Court; and the influences which it felt were specific and personal. James's artistic tastes, his love of pageantry, and his patronage of scholars and musicians were stronger than his kingly instincts, and the lesson of his reign is to be found rather in the literary revival, in the foundation of Universities and in Education Acts, in the introduction of printing, and in the building of palaces, than in his diplomatic prestige and profitless knight-errantry. These tastes, which Ariosto and Erasmus deigned to praise, were reflected in his Court. Literature could not well escape their influence, and thus we find not only that it shows signs of renewal and of wider practice, but that it is confirmed, almost to the exclusion of everything else, in the courtly allegorical mood of a dying tradition. It is a reversion, though with something more of cynicism in it, to the old dreamland, which suggested and was interpreted by the pageantry and heraldic display of the reign. Though this is the century of the rise of the middle classes, the poetic interest has little, if any, of that broad sympathy which characterises the author of the *Canterbury Tales* or even of the *Male Regle*. In its coarser vein it is less truly *bourgeois* than

contemporary letters were in England or on the Continent. Dunbar, the richest endowed of the Makaris, but seldom gives a hint, even in his most expansive moods, of any artistic interest in things uncourtly, and it is typical that he should conclude his description of the craftsmen who crowded the king's palace with the remark that they

> "pleisand ar and honorable,
> And to your hienes profitable."

William Dunbar.

William Dunbar (?1460-?1520)[1] has been called the "Scottish Chaucer," and, again, the "Scottish Skelton"; which would seem to be an uncritical way of honouring his original genius. His position at the head of the older Scots Makaris remains secure, but the grounds upon which this reputation justly rests have not always been seen by his admirers. It is derived from the purely artistic quality of his work, from his appreciation of the literary capabilities of the material and form which lay to hand. He is less elaborate than James I., and less dainty than Henryson, but he transcends both in literary capacity. He marks the culmination of that tendency which distinguishes his contemporaries, before it is coloured by the pedantries of Gavin Douglas or the polemics of

[1] Ed. Laing (2 vols., 1824), but superseded by the edition of Small, Mackay, and Gregor (S.T.S., 3 vols., 1893). Another complete edition appeared at Vienna in 1894 (1 vol., 4to), edited by Dr Schipper, the author of *William Dunbar: Sein Leben und seine Gedichte* (Berlin, 1884). This last is chiefly remarkable for its translations of a number of Dunbar's poems into modern German.

Lyndsay. He is thus the most representative of the essential quality of Middle Scots poetry. It dominates his art throughout all the varied forms of expression. In allegory, which is his fundamental mood, his primary intention is to produce pictorial effect. This is obvious in the *Golden Targe*, where the familiar form is used as a setting for detailed pictures of pageantry—the literary counterpart of the courtly display at the Scottish Court described in his *Remonstrance*. So, also, in the heraldic extravagance of the *Thrissil and the Rois*. Even in the *Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis*, a subject from which the later allegory could hardly fail to draw a moral, his main interest is in the arrangement of colour-effects. His non-allegorical pieces, too, may be considered as studies: his series of Complaints, like all such poems of the fifteenth century, are certainly in this category; his satires are not entirely for the sake of reformation; and even his best devotional work, like the triumphant "Done is a Battell on the Dragon Blak," is richer in artistic than religious seriousness. This individual character is most remarkable in his allegorical verse, where it compensates for the century's poorer ideals and shallower passion. It even verges on sheer conceit, as in the *Thrissil and the Rois*; and in some of his shorter poems we might well discover something of later artificiality, were we not distracted by his rollicking and fantastic humour.

His literary intention.

If his artistic eye was attracted by the rich colours of his courtly surroundings, he at the same time, by

the very keenness of his vision, obtained results which were impossible within the narrow horizon of the merely contemporary. We must remember that the atmosphere was still mediæval, more emphatically so than the process of the century or the imminence of the Renaissance might lead us to expect. The very conditions of this literary revival were reactionary—a return to the antique courtliness, the more marked because it was belated, and because it was supported by the strong personality of the monarch. James, if tradition be true, endeavoured to realise the Arthurian chivalry in his "Round Table" at Stirling, in his Arthurian order of knighthood, and in the joustings of real Sir Gawanes. Dunbar's bias is in the other direction. He is not historical in taste; he has no interest in the material of chronicle and romance; and, though he is in spirit and by circumstance an allegorist, he wanders through the formal Garden of the Rose in no very devout way, for the times had suffered change, nor, on the other hand, with the dull propriety of the later comers, for his spirits are too good. In a certain pronounced way he is unmediæval, not because he shares the restlessness and cynicism of the century's close, but in respect of his intellectual curiosity and his power of adaptation. He shows this not only in the wide range of subject,—which, if less historical than in preceding verse, is at once ampler and more eclectic,—but in his formal variety. No poet before him expressed himself in such a diversity of metres, ranging through the Chaucerian forms to the French ballade of Charles d'Orléans and Villon

and the eccentric 'wheel' strophes of the alliterative romances. The result is anything but a poor gallimaufry. He does not merely copy; he does not hesitate to alter and adapt, and he justifies his audacity by the felicity of his experiments. The further fact, too, that all his poems are short, rather differentiates him from others, at least from those of the fifteenth century. His most studied effort, *The Golden Targe*, has but 279 lines, the verse Billingsgate of the *Flyting* is perhaps long at 554, the satirical sketch of the *Twa Mariit Wemen and the Wedo* runs to 530: nearly every other poem, except the putative *Freiris of Berwik*, which as a tale might well have exceeded its 590, is within the limits of one or two pages of a modern octavo. This restraint is the more remarkable because his work is certainly not entirely, or indeed pre-eminently, occasional in character. The reasons are probably to be sought in his personal mood, for Gavin Douglas has something of the mediæval diffuseness in his *Palice of Honour*, and Lyndsay out-Gowers Gower in his colossal *Monarchy*. The fact is worthy of attention, partly because it coincides with a general tendency to curtailment which is to be noted in some departments of fifteenth-century letters,[1] and partly because it seems to be connected with a certain lyrical tendency which is discernible here and there in his work. His latest editors deny him this quality. It is certainly absurd to discover any very distinct lyrical strain, or to say that even in his most professed love-

His technical variety.

[1] See especially the chapter on the Ballads.

pieces there is more emotion than rhetoric. But though he lacks the song-note of the fourteenth century, as voiced in *Alysoun*, or in the *Merciles Beauté* of Chaucer, he yet has something of the throb, especially if we are sufficiently open-minded not to confine the lyrical to the merely erotic. It is heard, though indistinctly, in his verses "To a Ladye," but more clearly in the sombre plaints "All erdly Joy returnis in Pane" and "O Wreche, be war." Merely suggested as it may be, it is of positive value in the estimate of the poet, and especially instructive by its appearance in the midst of the artificialities of its time. It is often found conjoined with humour, which Dunbar certainly possesses in no small degree. This quality has escaped the ken of some worthy critics impressed by his sheer power of satire; just as others who have allowed him a deep thoughtfulness have refused him an emotional range. Dunbar is called a satirist, but he is a satirist with a distinction. He is neither the stern preacher like Langland, nor the spiteful accuser like Lyndsay. His verse is more akin to the quipping manner of Chaucer. This is said advisedly, notwithstanding the *Flyting* or the verses on the Friars, for behind the fustian wrath we see the merry twinkle. There is a certain capacity for humour required to "swear at large," as Dunbar does in the *Flyting*, or to make the *Dance of the Sevin Deidly Synnis* something more than a spectacle of horrors or a preacher's warning. His humour is more often subtle than blatant, a mirthfulness of the eye rather than of the throat.

His irrepressible humour.

In this respect he is far above his contemporaries, and is akin to Burns. Take, for example, his waggish ballad on *Kynd Kittok*, where, after telling the story of the thirsty ale-wife within and without the gates of Heaven, he concludes—

> "Frendis, I pray you hertfully,
> Gif ye be thristy or dry,
> Drink with my Guddame, as ye ga by,
> Anys for my saik."

Is not this more than a verbal likeness to the close of Burns's *Address to the Deil*, or the *Dying Words of Poor Mailie*, or the *Pet Yowe*? His Complaints and Petitions have all the unreality of these fifteenth-century exercises, with the difference that, whereas others made them to turn a phrase if not to turn a penny, he wrote with his tongue in his cheek. His *Complaint to the King* does not show "the rage of a disappointed candidate," and is eminently lacking in seriousness. Its quagmire of verbal eccentricities, in which a modern philologer might well lose himself, was in all probability, had we the key, a study in fifteenth-century nonsense which made for merriment at his Majesty's Court as the "Hunting of the Snark" and the ditties of the Topsy-turvy Muse do for the wider public of to-day. In this matter he reminds us of Skelton, as in his *Dirge*, in which, in the parodied words of the funeral service, he exhorts the king to leave the dull company of the Observantines at Stirling, or in the fusillade of short lines in his epitaph on Donald Owre. His delight in the whimsical

is subtler than anything we can find in the verse of the rector of Diss; as, for example, in *Kynd Kittok*, already referred to, where he describes the ale-wife's journey to Heaven—

> "Yit scho wanderit, and geid by to ane elriche well.
> Scho met thar, as I wene,
> Ane ask rydand on a snaill.
> Et cryit, 'Ourtane fallow, haill!'
> And raid ane inche behind the taill,
> Till it wes neir evin."

There is something of the same in the introduction of the she-dragon and the witch in his *Vision*, which opens with the conventional sleeplessness and the converse with Dame Fortune. Dunbar's humour is also more sustained than Skelton's; and for this reason the Scot's satirical writings, though not behind in bluster, are less incisive than Skelton's. The quality of Dunbar's humour is the more remarkable at this time, when the whole social and literary air resounded with chivalry. He felt, and his hearers too perhaps felt, the unreality of the new knight-errantry; but it is the comedy of it, not the luxury and extravagance, which moves him. So he has given us the *Turnament* between the tailor and cobbler, with its even more mischievous *Amendis* to the offended craftsmen, and not a few verses on the display at Court, including some on Black Elen, the captive negress; and he pokes fun at the literary mannerisms of the day in the opening lines of his hen-feather tragedy of the Friar of Tungland. In his satire on swearing, where with something of the manner of Eustache Deschamps he

reviews the oaths appropriate to each class and trade, he may be suspected of sheer devilry in running over the gamut of objurgation, and certainly of no anxiety for the reformation of the fishwives:—

> "The fische wyffis flett and swoir with granis
> And to the Feind, saule, flesch, and banis,
> They gaif theme, with ane schowt on hie;
> The Devil said, 'Welcum *all att anis*,
> Renunce thy God and cum to me.'"

Even in his more 'local' verses, such as *Tidings from the Session* and a *Satire on Edinburgh*, he has not the seriousness of *London Lickpenny*. It is only in his later poems, presumably after 1513, that he grows pensive in Orisons, Passions, and meditations on life's vanities. Yet in the sombre light of the evening of his journey he hardly sees the spectres which terrified the sickening century. It was the real Dunbar who wrote—

> "How evir this warld do change and vary
> Lat us in hairt nevir moir be sary,
> Bot evir be reddy and addrest
> To pass out of this frawdfull fary;
> For to be blyth me think it best."

His artistic range.

It is, perhaps, difficult to define Dunbar's position in the process of fifteenth-century poetry, for his originality rather defies the interpretation of his work in relation to that of more even-tenored, if less brilliant, contemporaries. He is strangely complex, at once conventional and audacious; yet he makes no compromise between those opposites, but throws them together in daring con-

trast. The new is however stronger than the old, for though he is the head of the allegorical school he is less at variance with modern taste than Henryson or even Douglas, and though he has his 'Laments,' his 'Petitions,' his 'Testaments,' and all the paraphernalia of an outworn art, no one in his time has less of the merely mediæval. He exemplifies the two essential elements of the Renaissance, its individualism and its humanity, as expressed in the familiar terms *unicus* and *humanus*—but with certain qualifications. His 'humanity' is neither the culture of the Italian type or even that of his contemporary Douglas, nor is it universal in the Terentian sense. But by the intensity and range of his literary faculty, and by his full-bloodedness, he is with the New Spirit. Even his break with the old ascetic ideals was not altogether the original sin of genius, but was in artistic sympathy with the spirit which was growing weary of languishing saints, the Grand Tour of the Garden of the Rose, and the wisdom of Experience and the Courtier. In him it is a mere sympathy and suggestion, unaffected by any direct influence from without.

Gavin Douglas.

I have the more readily emphasised this aspect of Dunbar's work because it is a tradition to speak of his contemporary Gavin Douglas (?1474-1522)[1] as the chief harbinger of the Renaissance in Scotland, both in its general doctrine and in its more particular interest in classical scholarship. The inference is tempting, and the proofs seem to lie on the

[1] Ed. Small, 4 vols., Edin., 1874. A critical edition is much needed.

surface. His descriptions of nature are not conventional missal pictures. His landscapes are drawn with a spirit which may call to mind the vivid manner of Pius II. in the passage on the view of Latium from the summit of Monte Cælio. Not only is he the first verse translator of Virgil, but in his method he is in sympathy with the New Learning, in his plea for direct impression in literary work, in his criticism of Caxton's shortcomings in scholarship, even in the severity of that attack, which recalls the amenities of Renaissance disputation. If we assume so much, it is not difficult to pass to a yet more emphatic opinion that "no poet, not even Dante himself, ever drank more deeply of the spirit of Virgil than Gavin Douglas,"[1] or to see in him a lonely scholar in the midst of Vandal surroundings.[2]

Essentially mediæval.

Yet I think that the more closely we examine the work of Gavin Douglas, the more we shall find that in him this 'modern' quality is only a kind of accident and in no sense a property. He is in spirit and in practice a mediævalist, perhaps more completely so than any of his contemporaries, and certainly very much more so than Dunbar. He is essentially a Court allegorist. The *Palice of Honour* and *King Hart* are in *motif* mainly retrospective. Not only does he follow the old scenario and details of the *Rose* — the Goddess, Cupid, the Lovers, a "ballet of inconstant Love," the crowd of "vertuus men" and "craftye pepyll"; but

[1] So Mr Courthope, *History of English Poetry*, i. 378.

[2] And so Mr Andrew Lang, Ward's *English Poets*, i. 159.

in those transformed passages in which some have found proof of his originality he clearly follows the general bias of the later or literary allegory and directly copies the variations of predecessors. Thus the famous passage in the seventh Prologue, where, in pleasing modification of the old poetic trick of introducing the main matter as a dream or the musing of a restless night, he describes the stormy weather without, makes himself cosy within with wraps and cordials, and proceeds to his bookish task—all this has been said, and said better, by Henryson by way of prelude to his task of continuing Chaucer's *Troilus*. In the pictorial passages of his allegory he shows the same tendencies which we find in Henryson and Dunbar, but he is less masterly in his touch; as also in the jostle of names and places, which, if erudite or humanistic, is so only in the unillumined way of the thirteenth century. He has an incurable fondness for the mediæval 'catalogue,' which he shows not only in his roll of poets or of virtues and vices and in his geographical wanderings, but even in his descriptive passages. His sketch of the Palace with its 'pinnaklis,' 'fyellis,' 'skarsment,' 'reprise,' 'corbell,' 'jalme,' and what not, might be a specification for a monastic architect; and the rural picture of the twelfth Prologue, though perhaps drawn from a personal knowledge of the Scottish flora, has neither the truth of nature nor the conviction of art. He is distractingly diffuse, full of "wyndy blastis and ventosities"; and he has none of that restraint which his delight in Virgil might presuppose. His short poem

on *Conscience* shows his scholastic turn of mind. His endeavour to Christianise the Pagan mythology may be excused in the churchman, though he was not without, even Papal, precedent in a whole-hearted devotion to the gods and goddesses; but the result differs from the mixture of Christian and Pagan elements which we find in contemporary literature, or even in the poetry of Dante. The 'moral' tone of his allegory is not the infection of the Renaissance but the fashion which had been growing in Scots Letters throughout the century; and his onslaught on Caxton, though by its circumstances rather more critical than personal, shows the tradition of the *Flyting* rather than the promise of the temper of Erasmus and Buchanan. Even in the Prologues, where originality was invited, he but rings the changes on the old allegory, and is so unclassical and unmodern as to return, though perhaps for amusement, to the complicated alliterative verse of the untutored vernacular.

The common view of Douglas's position comes from a misinterpretation of the literary tendency of his verse. Like Dunbar he illustrates that secondary stage in the progress from allegory to the poetry of the Revival, in which the poetic mind uses the material of the older art as a basis for artistic elaboration. Both are of course on the way to the Renaissance, but both are unconscious of its doctrine. Dunbar by sheer force of genius comes nearer the later expression; Douglas, more stolid and slower-witted, shows no advance on Henryson. But the happy accident

of the *Aeneid* offers a plausible explanation of this very literary quality, which escapes us in our estimate of other poets, because in them it works entirely in the older stuff, without any delusory reference to the *material* of the coming change. The truth is that Douglas, in so far as he is of the Renaissance, is a mere dilettante. He lacks the artistic fervour of Dunbar which surmounts the half-heartedness of the age. He has an aptitude for letters; but he cannot catch the quintessence of the old, nor, by telling over the names of Poggio, Valla, and their fellows, or by lingering over the Evangel of Troy, can he claim communion with the classical spirit. In speaking of his translation he says—

> "Bot my propyne comyn fra the pres fuit hait,
> Unforlatit, not jawyn fra tun to tun,
> In fresche sapour new fro the berrie run" (*Prol.* v.)

'My gift comes foot-hot from the wine-press, fresh-drawn, not dashed from tun to tun; with fresh flavour, full from the berry.' It is here his luck to supply a motto which admirably expresses the content of the Renaissance, in its literary, artistic, scholarly, and theological aspects; but it was not given to him to feel the new life in his veins. His undoubted intellectual momentum makes his failure in both the new-in-the-old and the old-in-the-new the more remarkable. Perhaps it was his very mental dignity which thwarted his muse; rather, it must be suspected, his indifferentism, his inability to care for full artistic enjoyment. Even in the formal matters

of his verse happy strokes are rare. He has not the variety of Dunbar; and against a certain metrical cunning shown in an occasional incisive couplet, a climax cadence, or a clever triple rhyme, we must place an ineptness of ear often worthy of the century at its worst. His heart was more in politics than in poetry, and, when promotion came, he soon forgot his plaything. Historically considered he is perhaps more interesting than Dunbar, for the lack of those individual qualities which secure the personal reputation of his contemporary helps us better to understand the dangers which beset the transition from poetic mannerism to literary consciousness.

Sir David Lyndsay.

The last of this Scots school of Allegory is Sir David Lyndsay (1490-1555),[1] who, though, in strict chronology, of the sixteenth century, is yet for critical as well as editorial reasons to be associated with the foregoing writers. Had we accepted the thesis of the classical quality of Gavin Douglas's work, we should have found an excellent companion subject in Lyndsay as the exponent of the theological side of the Renaissance. For the doctrine of 'directness' which Douglas states so pithily in the passage quoted above, but which he hardly applies in the practice of his own art, was but the literary expression of a general principle which urged others to scrutinise tradition on the side of religious custom and belief and to send the "unlernit" to the sources of sacred knowledge. Of this latter purpose the verse of Lyndsay shows ampler proof. His lateness

[1] Ed. Laing, 3 vols., 1879.

brought him nearer the time of revolt; and he would from his corner of Northern Europe naturally and more readily incline to the theological phase of the Revival. He feels that the vulgar must get their lesson direct, not from the "cunnyng clerkis" who understand Latin no more "than they do the ravyng of the rukis." As the Latin and Greek writers must not be read in the Arabian paraphrasts but in the best manuscripts which the Poggios may find, so Holy Writ must be freed from the mystification of an unknown tongue and brought to the understanding of all. The analogy is not complete, for the logic of the matter is that the Reformers should have gone straight to the Greek and Hebrew; but what Lyndsay and others meant was that the people should have the opportunity of a more direct and intelligent appreciation of the facts, and that the vernacular alone made this possible.

The theological Renaissance.

"Sanct Jerome in his propir toung Romane
The Law of God he trewlie did translait,
Out of Hebrew and Greik, in Latyne plane,
Quhilk hes lene hid from us lang tyme, God wait,
On to this tyme: but, efter myne consait,
Had Sanct Jerome bene borne in tyll Argyle,
Into Yrische toung his bukis had done compyle."[1]

Lyndsay's enthusiasm on this point, united with a general directness of purpose, proclaims him at once as of the New Age, and in purpose the co-worker with Hutten and Luther.

But there is much of the old way in him, more

[1] Lyndsay's *Monarchy*, Bk. I., ll. 323-329.

especially in his invention and technique. He uses the 'Testament,' in the poem so-called and in the *Papyngo* piece; the 'Complaint' is the form of three different sets of verses; in the *Jousting* and the *Answer to the King* he shows the continuing fondness for the 'Flyting'; in the *Dreme*, the *Deploratioun*, and even in the *Satire of the Thrie Estaitis*, we find echoes of the Courts of Love; he recalls the *Miseriae Curialium* in his complaint of the old dog Bagsche; he often rides the hobbies of the Schools and revels in those lengthy miscellaneous lists of names, so dear to the mediæval mind. Much of this was general poetic tradition, but most of it is directly modelled on Chaucer, to whom Lyndsay, like all the other Makaris, acknowledges discipleship. Spiritually he has little in common with the older poet; but in the matter of form, and even in word and phrase, he testifies to Chaucer's enduring influence, even into the sixteenth century. Thus his description of Squyer William Meldrum is a careful copy, to the minutest detail, of Chaucer's sketch of the "yong Squyer" in the Prologue to the *Canterbury Tales*; and his praise of the eyes of the lamented Queen Magdalene is in the very words which Chaucer humorously applies to the twinkle of the "wanton and merye" Friar. We should probably not have had the amusing passages between the Papyngo and her executors had we not had the *Parlement of Foules*. His favourite stanza is the seven-lined. Like others of the Chaucerian School he has not a little occasional verse on follies, chiefly feminine, such as *On Syde*

His formal debt to the past.

Taillis,[1] and here and there references to the failings of the fair sex, but in his tone he is rather more acrimonious than the earlier poets. So far, and chiefly in an external and formal way, he stands with the old; yet in essentials he shows important differences. The emphasis of his criticism of women may be the working of the Jean de Meun spirit, or it may be the Lyon King's ungallant way of deploring his royal master's weaknesses; but there is more striking evidence throughout his work how far he had wandered from the old allegorical ideals. He does not use the form, as the early fifteenth-century verse-makers did, merely as a cloak for a general sermon on the Vanities, or, as Dunbar did, because it helped him to pictorial effects. He is on all occasions a preacher for the times; he dreams by courtesy to literary custom, and only as a mere prelude to his serious interest in contemporary politics or historical analogies. In his most conventional passages we suspect that Pride stands for a certain prelate, that his Papyngo is a Scots bird and will have something to say on current events, and that the "ageit man" Experience talks of the worship of Venus and Juno that he may lead up to the idolatry of Edinburgh and the abomination of Loretto. Scotland supplies the stations of his Itinerary. More often he makes no secret of his intention, and rapidly passes through a few colourless stanzas to the business on hand. There his purpose is not exactly satirical, but it suggests the mood of the satirist, and it in-

His seriousness and actuality.

[1] *I.e.*, on wide (or long) trains.

dicates the presence of the New Spirit. In his purely satirical verse, too, we see a similar development; *Kitteis Confessioun* is a more uncompromising burlesque of Church ordinance, and the *Justing* mocks the mimic chivalry of the time with a seriousness which we do not find in Dunbar's *Turnament*. His tendency, too, towards the dramatic is further proof that the final stages of crystallisation had begun in the allegory.[1]

His poetic restrictions.

Not only does Lyndsay's work show little or nothing of the quality of early allegory, but it illustrates the general paralysis of poetic power which had set in. He is too loud-voiced for reformation to have an ear for the undertones. With blatant honesty he tells us that he "did nevir sleip on Pernasso" nor drink of Helicon, "that mellifluous, famous, fresche fontane"; and his abjuration of the delights of the classical muse meant to him also the abjuration of poesy itself. His age had turned from the ascent of an impossible Parnassus to "the straucht way" to "Mont Calvarie"; and Pegasus had become a sorry hack, drawing the rumbling cart on which politicians and theologians sent their wares to market. If Lyndsay is to call on any Pagan deity for inspiration, it will be on "raveand Rhamnusia, goddes of dispyte." In the prelude to the *Dreme*, where his fancy has fullest play, he repeats the old Scottish imagery of a cold stormy night, but instead of taking comfort from fire-light and cordials, or of musing over a book, he wanders forth to the wild seashore, and "for passing of the tyme" climbs into a cave, high in

[1] See chap. viii.

a crag, where, clad in cloak and hood and with mittens on his hands, he gazes on the driving sleet till he falls a-dreaming of the sorrows of Scotland. Denied as he thus is of some of the essential qualities of poet (not that the Muses always require a clear hearth and cordials), he is yet by no means dull and uninteresting; for, though he is a confirmed dyspeptic as far as the matter of his verse is concerned, he makes amends by the energy and vivacity of its form. He is at a disadvantage in the ill-knit and tedious *Dialogue betwix Experience and a Courtier*, but elsewhere he shows a remarkable metrical facility. In the stanzas of the *Testament of the Papyngo* or of the *Complaynt of Bagsche* he runs on without effort; in the poem on Queen Magdalene (in which he most nearly approaches the pageant pictures of Dunbar) his verse rolls in majestic ease; and in the *Historie of Squyer Meldrum* he outstrips all contemporary romance by the spirit and rush of his lines. In the last poem he forgets the worries of Church and State and throws himself heartily into the frolics of the lusty Squire. He is not lacking in humour, but his occasion is rare. Like Henryson, he amuses a modern reader by the quaintness of epithet and phrase, for which not he but trickish Time must have the credit or the blame. But a discontented sadness is his prevailing mood, and he fittingly marks the boundary between the artistic quickness of the fifteenth century and the severity of the sixteenth —neither quite with the one in its fancy, nor with the other in its quarrel.

His metrical facility.

Henryson, Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndsay might themselves suffice for the literary reputation of the time, but critical tradition, following the saw that one, or even four, swallows do not make a summer, has associated with them an indefinite number of minor poets. Dunbar, Douglas, and Lyndsay themselves supplied the hint, the first in his generous *Lament for the Makaris*, the second in his *Palice of Honour*, and the last in his *Testament of the Papyngo*; and so it has happened that from their mere lists later criticism has indulged in persistent extravagance about "nests of singing birds" and "floods of poesy." In this crowd we have Walter Kennedy, James Afflek, Merser, Quintyne Schaw, two Rowlls, David Steele, Patrick Johnstone, Clapperton, two Clerks, James Inglis, Heryot, Mungo Lockhart, John the Ross, John Reid or Stobo, 'Sandy' Traill, Gilbert Hay, besides others, named and unnamed. The reader who will take the trouble to trace these names through the editorial notes of Hailes, Pinkerton, and Sibbald, and will venture further to a perusal of the Bannatyne MS., and to the unprinted portions of the Asloan and Maitland MSS., will be struck by three things. First, it will be found that the extant remains are strangely meagre, that hardly any poet has been credited with more than a single piece and that of the shortest, and that the majority have nothing but a reputation for verse-making. Secondly, that in the earliest MSS. there is much counterswearing as to authorship—a confusion which has been in no wise diminished by later editors.

The Minor Makaris.

An historical misconception.

In a few cases, such as in that of the *Thrie Deid Powis*, whose authorship had been allowed alike to Patrick Johnstone and Henryson, judgment has now been given with some certainty, probably as much because such poems are above the general mediocrity and are to some extent reminiscent of the better Makaris as because of any bibliographical or biographical clue. If external evidence fail us, we shall not be helped by any subtler methods of comparison, for it is painfully borne in upon us (and this will be the third reflection) that the quality is, as Pinkerton said of Allan Ramsay's verse, "beneath the middling, and showing no spark of genius." The poems deal with the subjects popular throughout the century, as the titles will show—*Advyce to a Courtier*, *The Passion*, *Wa worth Marriage*, *Judgment*, *A General Cursing*, *Perrell in Paramours*, *The Quair of Jelousy*, or the *Praise of Aige*. They are all in the courtly allegorical vein, with the usual varieties of invective against the bliss of marriage and the constancy of women. Yet there are few lines which are better, either in phrase or in rhythm, than the halting commonplaces of Occleve at his worst.[1] It is hardly necessary to qualify this by saying that we have but a fragment of the minor poetry, and that something better may have been lost, and may yet be recovered. The severer estimate is but a fair deduction from the *uniform* poorness of the extant pieces, and it is perhaps rash to assume

The poor quality of the minor verse.

[1] Except pieces like the second ballad printed in Dr Lumby's *Ratis Raving*, &c., which are but scribe's copies, in Middle Scots, of Chaucer's verse.

that the unidentified items in Dunbar's or Lindsay's lists could be brought under the head of poetry. There is in these lists such a delightful mediæval indifference to chronology and category that it is difficult to avoid the suspicion that we are often in quest of some musician, *raconteur*, or fifteenth-century Inigo Jones.[1] If a distinction must be made it will be in favour of Walter Kennedy (?1460-?1508) and Quintyne Schaw (*d.* ?1500). Both are referred to by Dunbar and Douglas, and in Lyndsay they are named together as the chief Court poets. Kennedy is best known by his association with Dunbar in the famous *Flyting*, in which he plays the *rôle* of champion of "Yrishrie," or western Celticism, against the Lowland Dunbar. He and Quintyne seem to have collaborated in a piece in which they appear as writers

Walter Kennedy and Quintyne Schaw.

> "Quhilk hes thame self aboif the sternis styld,"

and Kennedy's contributions to the *Flyting* show, with all allowance for the forced exaggeration of that composition, a self-complacency which his single efforts hardly justify. Had he been the author of *Kynd Kittok*, as used to be said, a generous oblivion might have overtaken his *Prais of Aige*, *Ane Aigit Manis Invectyve*, *Ballat in Praise of our Lady*, *Pious Counsale*, and *The Passioun*. The last, probably the longest example of the minor muse, is intolerably dull; and his *Prais of Aige*, though formally more creditable, suffers by comparison with Henryson's rather heavy poem on the

[1] For Gilbert Hay, for example, see *infra*, p. 342.

same subject. Quintyne Schaw, or plain Quintyne, is represented by but one poem, the six-stanzaed *Advyce to a Courtier*, in which, in the metaphor of a weather-stricken ship, he makes the old plaint of the instability of favour at Court. In Rat's, or Rait's, dull *Raving*[1] on the vices and virtues we have a middle stage in homiletic garrulity between Gower's *Confessio* and Lyndsay's *Monarchy*. If any one of the minor Makaris could claim the pretty *Murning Maiden*, otherwise known as 'Still under the levis grene,' we should hold him in better esteem, for though the piece repeats the tricks of the courtly verse it is in poetic capacity hardly inferior to Henryson's pastoral.[2]

The alliterative verse.

We turn from this maudlin verse to the older alliterative measures of the more vulgar muse, with that sense of relief which comes from sheer contrariety. Here we have but a straggling verse-tradition, limited in artistic possibilities, and moribund; yet the reappearance in the midst of the allegorical and Chaucerian phase of Scots poetry has some significance. It is a curious fact that a literary form so complicated and difficult to manage should be associated with the more popular literature. It is a compromise between the older love of alliteration and the newer necessity of rhyme, resulting in the most elaborate scheme of short and long lines, with variety of ictus. Described briefly, each stanza consists of thir-

[1] Ed. Lumby (E.E.T.S., 1870).

[2] The printed remains of these poets will be found in the Hunterian Club's edition of the Bannatyne MS., in Hailes, Pinkerton, and Sibbald, and in the rare supplement to Laing's Dunbar (1865).

teen lines, in two parts of eight and five. In the first the lines preserve the old alliterative cadence, and have four stressed syllables and but two rhymes, used alternatively; in the second, the first line generally repeats the run of the preceding lines, but the last four break off into short lines of two accents, the tenth, eleventh, and twelfth rhyming together, and the last with the ninth. This elaborate compound of "rum-ram-ruf" and rhyme is indigenous to the North, and seems to have been used in a spasmodic way in the early Mysteries in England, notably in the York and Towneley Plays, but the most complete examples are found in Scots verse between 1350 and 1450. There are five of these, of which three, *The Buke of the Howlat*, *The Knightly Tale of Gologras and Gawane*, and *The Taill of Rauf Coilȝear*, fall within our period, —the earlier two, *The Pistill of Susan* and the *Awntyrs of Arthure* (*c.* 1350), being ascribed to the mysterious Hucheoun. To him too has been given *Gologras and Gawane*, but marked differences in style show that it could not be by the author of the *Pistill*, and that it is safer to accept the bare statement of Dunbar in his *Lament*, and give it to an equally mysterious but later Scot, Clerk of Tranent. The poem is really contemporary with Henry the Minstrel's *Wallace* (*c.* 1470). It is a romance of the Arthurian cycle, pieced together from the *Perceval le Gallois* of Chrestien de Troyes. It is interesting in one way, and that not merely accidental, in having been the first issue of the printing press which Chepman and Millar set up in 1508. That it should have been the first is important

evidence of the popularity of romance, and of Arthurian story in particular, at the Court of James IV. Its publication must have been due either to direct royal command, or to the merchant-printers' keen appreciation of contemporary taste. *Rauf Coilȝear*, of the same date, and perhaps the work of Clerk of Tranent, deals with the Charlemagne story, but in the less heroic vein of domestic adventure between the "renowned roy" and his collier subject of the "thrawin brow." The *motif* is common in English popular and ballad literature, and it may have been the literary inspiration of the disguises and wandering freaks of James's son, the 'Gudeman of Ballangeich.' We know, from the evidence of the chief poets of this period and of the next, that the tale was extremely popular. It must have commended itself by its peculiarly Scottish colour, which, despite the possibilities of French origin, distinguishes it from the generality of the romances. It shows that growing interest in the simpler order of life which characterises the closing century, and became the fashion of even the Court when the exotic literary tastes had passed with James IV., and when the disaster at Flodden had broken the pleasant dream of knightly pageantry and foray. The most notable example from a literary point of view is the *Buke of the Howlat* written by Richard Holland,[1] at Darnaway, about 1450, for his patron the Countess of Moray. In this curious production the older critics,

Rauf Coilȝear.

The Buke of the Howlat.

[1] Or Richard de Holande. See the account in Mr Amours's Introduction to *Scottish Alliterative Romances* (S.T.S., 1897).

with that keen scent for everything non-literary, saw a satire on James II., or a laud of the Douglases, or a general sermon on Pride. Sir Walter Scott more justly described it as a "poetical apologue . . . without any view whatever to local or national politics," for the poem is nothing more nor less than a poetical exercise on well-known lines, and the personal references to the "Dove of Dunbar" are at once a reasonable act of courtesy, like Skelton's in his *Garland of Laurell*, and a mannerism of the allegorical poetry. The opening stanzas show the intention of the poet to follow the literary conventions of the *Rose*,—it is a May morning, the meadow is decked with flowers, the river runs by, and the birds make merry; and the body of the poem, describing the colloquies of the birds regarding the plaint of the Owl to Dame Nature "for shame of his shape," continues the tradition of Chaucer's *Parlement of Foules* or his French originals. But obvious as is this connection, there is a note of individuality, not in the narrower sense of 'local colour,' but in the easy way in which the poet swings along the old highway, the more remarkably because of the ruts and roughnesses of his complicated stanza. Like Dunbar he pokes fun at his Gaelic countrymen. He introduces the Rook in the contemptible *rôle* of a "bard"—

> "Sa come the Ruke with a rerd and a rane roch
> A bard owt of Irland with Banachadee!
> Said: 'Gluntow guk dynyd dach hala mischy doch;
> Raike hir a rug of a rost, or scho sall ryive the.

Mich macmory ach mach momentir moch loch ;
Set hir doone, gif hir drink ; quhat Dele alis the ?'
O Deremyne, O Donnall, O Dochardy droch ;
Thir ar his Irland kingis of the Irischerye :
O Knewlyn, O Conocher, O Gregre Makgrane :
The Schenachy, the Clarschach,
The Ben schene, the Ballach,
The Crekery, the Corach,
Scho kennis thaim ilkane."

I have ventured to quote this stanza, knowing that it may disconcert the reader of the most catholic taste. It will perplex the philologers, too, for its Gaelic was "never spoken in Argyle." Yet it is far from meaningless, if the contemporary and later context be supplied; for it is through the medium of this verse that the Scottish spirit finds expression for that peculiar satirical and topsy-turvy humour which continues (though with technical variations) as late as the close of the eighteenth century. I have already referred to this Scottish Skeltonism in Dunbar, who seems to have found it tempting not only for burlesque of the romances of the *Awntyrs* type and of antique manners generally, but for the exercise of the fantastic humour of *Kynd Kittok*.[1] And if we collect all the examples of the use of this measure, we shall find the same literary intention running throughout. Henryson's *Sum Practysis of Medecyne* is a burlesque of poetry as well as of "pottingary." Gavin Douglas's eighth Prologue, so delightfully inappropriate even as an interlude in his

[1] This mad wit has some psychological kinship to the English "Tom-a-Bedlams" of the seventeenth century (*e.g.*, the well-known "As it befell one Satterday att noone") and in the French "Coq-à-l'âne."

translation of the *Aeneid*, is not only a mere *tour de force*, with a suspicion of satire on the uncourtly dreaming and on the "romanis" that "ar bot rydlis"; towards the close it slips into skimble-skamble about mole-hills and what not, which is admitted to be "but faynt fantasy." Sir David Lyndsay uses it only once, in the opening stanza of the *Satyre of the Thrie Estates*, which is but a commonplace invocation to the Trinity; but the closing "bob" tempts him to much metrical irregularity, and to the conclusion—

The function of the belated alliterative verse.

> "Thairfoir till all our rymis be rung,
> And our mistonit sangis be sung,
> Let everie man keip weill ane toung
> And everie woman tway."

Its later history, in a portion of Montgomerie's *Flyting*, is beyond our present purpose, though the fantastic fragment of the *Gyre-Carling*,[1] the witch-queen, may belong to this period. So too are the still later forms, where, though the alliteration and some of the lines have disappeared, the old spirit of raillery finds its fantastic shrine. It reached its fullest expression during the fifteenth century. Janus-like in its form, uniting the prehistoric alliteration with the over-sea rhyme, it represents on the more literary side the two opposing tendencies, on the one hand towards the old, and on the other towards the new. For it is the instrument of the popular revival of the antique matter of the romances, and, on the other hand, of the spirit

[1] Laing's *Select Remains*, p. 274.

of burlesque and of that awakening interest in the workaday life of John-the-Commonweal which characterise the period of transition. Further, it introduces us to that spirit of nonsense and whimsicality, to that fifteenth-century Alice and her Wonderland, which relieves, in its own uncertain way, the tedium of the journey to and from the Palace of Honour. There is something in the swish of the four short lines at the end of the stanza which upsets decorum, and sets poet and reader a-woolgathering. It is the century's Pindaric, the nemesis of the formal allegory by which it had been supplanted. Ancient and manneristic as it was, it became, like its Skeltonical analogue in England, the exponent of restlessness, and gave some promise of artistic change.

Outside these remains lie a number of anonymous pieces, which preserve, in a modified way, some of the foregoing characteristics. They are alliterative, but less elaborately so; the stanza is shorter (for the most part in ten lines), but the movement is similar, and concludes with a swish or bob as in the longer forms. They are almost entirely rustic in theme, and burlesque in treatment. They deal with village matters and bumpkin's ways, and when they touch on the things of romance it is but for the sake of parody. The outstanding examples of this *genre* are the well-known *Christis Kirk on the Grene* and *Peblis to the Play*. The authorship and dates of these poems have been much disputed. James I., who has been the victim

Other popular pieces.

of perhaps more critical give-and-take than any other author, was credited with the writing of them, but it is hard not to be sceptical of this ascription. I agree with a recent writer, who however accepts the Jacobean theory, that the antithesis between the courtliness of the *Quair* and the rusticities of these poems is no argument against a common origin.[1] But even if we neglect the analogy of the *Golden Targe* and *Kynd Kittok* in Dunbar and many other examples in this period alone, there seem to be adequate reasons for placing the date of composition nearer the end of the century, and for ascribing them, not necessarily to the rollicking James V., but to some unknown writer nearer the time of Sir David Lyndsay than of James I. Much of course rests on the identification of *Peblis to the Play*—which begins,

Christis Kirk on the Grene *and* Peblis to the Play.

> "At Beltane, quhen ilk bodie bownis
> To Peblis to the Play"—

with the *At Beltyn* poem, named in John Mair's account of James I.,[2] and mysteriously described in the words, "quem alii de Dalkeith et Gargeil[3] mutare studuerunt." In this case it must have been

[1] Mr T. F. Henderson: *Scottish Vernacular Literature*, 1898, pp. 103, &c.

[2] In his *History*, VI., xiv.

[3] The "Gargeil" has been a puzzle since Pinkerton's time. It occurs to me that it may stand for the Haddingtonshire *Garmylton* (Garleton), for Mair's copy might well have been misread by his Paris printers, especially if the word were contracted in the conventional way. Mair was a Haddingtonshire man.

known some time before 1521, when Mair's *History* appeared at Paris, during the childhood of James V.; and further support for this chronology is derived from the references and rather remarkable echoes of the poems in Sir David Lyndsay. It would however appear to be rash to assume from this external and internal evidence that the poem was written by James I. The linguistic and prosodic aspects of the problem appear to me to prove a later origin. The identity in tone of these poems partly with the alliterative pieces referred to above, and with the more "busteous" pieces of the Makaris, great and small, hints that they were written in the atmosphere of the second half of the century. The shortening of the stanza and the suggestion of the timbre of the ballad, both in metre and *motif*, indicate a later rather than an earlier stage, especially in the slower evolution of Scots poetic technique. The popular character of these verses, representing in their tavern humours and barn-yard frolics a type of Scottish *canti carnascialeschi*, precludes the assumption that they appeared before the rise of the *bourgeois* idea in the third or fourth quarters of the century. The anonymous piece *Sym and his Bruder*[1] may be somewhat later in date, but it is a perfect companion-piece in tone and execution.

The other anonymous popular poems which may be dated in the fifteenth century and first quarter of the sixteenth show greater variety in their metrical treatment, in eight-lined stanzas, rhymed couplets, &c.,

[1] Laing's *Select Remains* (1885).

but they continue to indulge the rougher fancy of *Christis Kirk on the Grene*[1] and its fellows. Thus the *Wyf of Auchtermuchty*[1] and the *Wowing of Jok and Jenny*, each in eight-lined stanzas and both perhaps *c.* 1520, are rustic types of the satirical *fabliau*. A more narrative style is found in pieces like *The Tale of Colkelbie Sow*,[1] *King Berdok*,[1] and especially the *Thrie Tailis of the Thrie Priestis of Peblis*[2] which is an indifferent companion to the *Freiris of Berwik* ascribed to Dunbar. Yet through all there runs a vein of burlesque and rough satire, which is continually breaking away into that nondescript humour in which Middle Scots poetry takes such delight. *King Berdok*, which is in some respects a Scottish *Rime of Sir Thopas*, runs its burlesque into sheer skimble-skamble:—

Rustic burlesques.

> "Be the grit King of Babilon, Berdok,
> That dwelt in symmer in till ane bowkaill stok;
> And into winter, quhen the frostis ar fell,
> He dwelt for cauld in till a cokkil schell."

The couplet acts as a drag on the whimsical intention, which has fuller play in the long alliterative stanzas of the *Gyre-Carling*.[3] And there, if anywhere, the fun approaches to the triumphant topsy-turvydom of Dunbar's *Droichis Part of the Play*.

The most interesting fact connected with this rough popular verse is that it supplies the historical basis

[1] Laing's *Select Remains* (1885).
[2] Laing's *Early Scottish Metrical Tales* (reprint 1889).
[3] Laing's *Select Remains* (1885).

for one of the most enduring characteristics of the later Scots muse. We have but to think of the Reformation verses, of Allan Ramsay, of Fergusson, and above all of Burns. And even in more learned bypaths, such as in the Latin *Polemo-Middinia*, ascribed to the Anglified Drummond of Hawthornden, there are the traits which we find again in *Maggy Johnstoun* and the *Jolly Beggars*.

The fifteenth-century recensions of the so-called Romance and Prophecies of Thomas of Erceldoune[1] have an adventitious Scottish interest. Whether or not they are the work of the mysterious Thomas, they were originally as popular in England, and did not show that specific Scottish colour which they acquired by frequent repetition and recasting. The romantic matter is Arthurian, and the gnomic portions are in all probability of ancient and universal vogue: but in the fifteenth century, or perhaps the fourteenth, they became, in a sense, a Scottish monopoly. The Scottish metrical romance of *Lancelot of the Laik*,[2] written at the very end of the century, is a paraphrase of a portion of the French *Lancelot du Lac*. There is a strong Chaucerian flavour throughout the poem,—a curious blend of allegorical and romantic elements; but it is chiefly interesting as being probably the last extant specimen of the Arthurian romance in its untouched mediæval form. The Scots *Alexander* (1438),[3] a translation from the French, has

[1] Ed. Murray (E.E.T.S., 1875). [2] Ed. Skeat (E.E.T.S., 1865).
[3] Printed by the Bannatyne Club (1831). See also Weber's *Metrical Romances*, I. lxxiii, &c.

no great merit. The translator's praise of that tongue for its "oppin sentence" and for being "sa clere" might have had far-reaching results in the preparation of the vernacular style had Scotland chosen to take the hint in the spirit of the English prose-writers.

Quite apart from this Lowland or 'Ynglis' literature stands the unique collection of Gaelic poems, written out in 1512 by the enthusiastic James MacGregor, Dean of Lismore.[1] Few of the pieces can be later than the fifteenth century, though some of the Ossianic fragments, representing rather more than a fifth of the whole, may be echoes from earlier centuries. The first Gaelic charter extant is dated no further back than 1408, and the *Book of the Dean of Lismore* is the oldest MS. authority for the literary remains of that speech. Its discovery destroyed the point of Dr Johnson's dictum, framed in the heat of the Macpherson controversy; and it is reasonable to believe, from internal evidence of the editorial tastes of the Dean's ancestors, and from more general considerations, that it was not the first anthology of the Gaelic muse. The collection contains over 300 pieces, running to a total of over 11,000 lines. The majority of the pieces are didactic and occasional—counsels to chiefs, satires on women, on sickness, on the deadly sins, and the like—or genealogies and clan-eulogies: a few, over a score in number, may be described as ballads of Finn,

Gaelic remains.

[1] *The Dean of Lismore's Book.* Ed. M'Lauchlan and Skene, Edin., 1862. See also Cameron, *Reliquiae Celticae*, vol. i.

Oisin, and other heroes of Gaelic story. The names of the authors are generally given, but they remain mere *viri obscuri*. Occasional beauties reveal themselves through the avalanche of metaphor and conceit, but the poems are as a whole tedious reading. Pieces like that of Gormlay, daughter of Flann,—

> "Monk, remove thy foot,
> Lift it off the grave of Nial.
> Too long dost thou heap the earth
> On him with whom I fain would lie," &c.,

have the note of true poetry, but their originals are probably long antecedent to the fifteenth century. The difficulty in appreciating this symbolic literature is to know how much the reader is expected to put into the poems to complete the artistic effect. They may help us to understand the persistent burlesques of things Celtic by contemporaries like Holland and Dunbar, who so brusquely recognise the æsthetic antipathy between the Makaris of the Lothians and the bards of 'Erschery.' If there is anything in common it is in that mystic, inconsequent, topsy-turvy mood, in which, however, the Lowland mind saw only the possibilities of intellectual pastime.

CHAPTER III.

BEFORE AND AFTER VILLON.

THE PHASES OF TRANSITION—I. 1400–C. 1430: MEDIÆVAL TRADITION—FROISSART'S LOVE-VERSES—DESCHAMPS AS A POET—CHRISTINE DE PISAN—THE CHIVALRIC IDEAL—PROFESSIONAL AUTHORSHIP—ALAIN CHARTIER—HIS PEDANTRY—UNIFORMITY OF EFFORT—HIS INFLUENCE—CHARLES D'ORLÉANS—HIS POSITION IN FRENCH POETRY—THE QUALITY OF HIS ART—UNIQUE AND WITHOUT INFLUENCE—MARTIN LEFRANC—MARTIAL D'AUVERGNE—MINOR ALLEGORISTS—II. THE MID-CENTURY—INDICATIONS OF CHANGE—CURTAILMENT IN FORM—CHANGE IN LITERARY 'PERSONNEL'—THE ALIENATION FROM VERSE—THE CHARACTER OF THE CHANGE—THE DETERMINATION OF THE LATER DEVELOPMENT OF FRENCH LITERATURE—FRANÇOIS VILLON—THE 'GRAND TESTAMENT'—THE HISTORICAL BASIS OF HIS WORK—THE LAST OUTPOST OF THE MODERN SPIRIT—HIS PERSONAL INTENSITY—HIS CONTEMPORARY QUALITIES—KING RENÉ—III. THE CLOSE OF THE CENTURY—GUILLAUME COQUILLART—HENRI BAUDE—THE 'GRANDS RHÉTORIQUEURS'—THEIR PROTEST—THE BURGUNDIANS—THE DEBT OF FRENCH LITERATURE TO CRETINISM.

A SURVEY of French poetry in the fifteenth century suggests two general reflections. First, the contrast between it and the verse of succeeding centuries in France is by no means so violent as between the English counterpart and what followed,

even immediately, in England; and, paradoxical though it may appear, this is probably truer of the generality of the period than of the exceptional and modern genius shown in the work of Villon. Secondly, in the French verse of this century we have a more complete and orderly epitome of the literary principles which lurk behind the wanton methods of the Great Transition. There is something of that later Gallic sense of logical propriety and clearness in the way in which it fulfils its function as a go-between, and shows in well-defined stages the change in literary fashion. Its succession of phase is more obvious and more differentiated than in English literature, where the Janus-head perplexes the historian who would accurately portray its features. French verse does not steadily present the double profile implied in the metaphor, but, with the greater precision of a *volte-face*, shows the contrast not only between the mediævalism of the early decades and the new spirit of the very close, but between each of these and the spirit of the period which separates them. For this interval, the fifteenth century proper in literary France—corresponding roughly with the sixty years between the martyrdom at Rouen and the eve of the victory at Fornovo—is not so much a compound of the Middle Ages and the Renaissance as a negation of both, naturally related to both and showing the influence of both, but *sui generis* and individualised.

The phases of transition.

Throughout the first period, from 1400 to about 1430, French verse is almost entirely interested in

sustaining the decadent mediævalism. It enjoys, as it may, the heritage of the *Rose*, protests against Jean de Meun, indulges but lightly in the frolics of *Renart*, would revive the chivalry of Arthur's Court, and, generally, takes pleasure in those moods of allegory, mysticism, and literary courtesy which sufficed for passion and were the sum of art throughout civilised Europe of that day. What has been said of England is true of France: in both, the same tendencies and the same tastes, a like reliance on authority and models, a like artificiality even in the most lyrical moments, a dulling and fading both of spirit and colour in love-verse, in romance, and in all the energies of the imagination. Reiteration is therefore unnecessary, beyond what is forced upon us in a sketch of the leading poets of the period. These are Christine de Pisan, Alain Chartier, and Charles d'Orléans. On the threshold are Jean Froissart, better known by his *Chronicles*, and Eustache Deschamps, whose chief fame must be as a contributor to the Arts of Rhetoric. Froissart[1] is rather of the fourteenth century (he was born in 1337), but, apart from the fact that he survived till about 1410, he writes in the spirit of the early fifteenth, and, with happy indifference to the merits of his prose, dedicated himself to the making of love-verses. To the queen of Edward III. he was but "la servant de beaux dictés et de traités amoureux," and forty years later he was proud to present to her son Richard II. a

I. 1400-c. 1430: Mediæval tradition.

Froissart's love-verses.

[1] Ed. Scheler, 3 vols., Brussels, 1870-72.

sumptuous copy of his poems. He confines himself almost entirely to the subject of Love—"d'amours," as he replied to Richard's query as to the contents of his volume. Throughout the *Paradys d'Amour*, the *Temple d'Amoureux*, the *Épinette amoureuse*, the *Buisson de Jonece*,[1] and other pieces, we have but the familiar phrasing of the Courts of Love, and the would-be narrative of his passion, relieved at times by the more literary artificialities of *virelais* and the like. We are still in the Garden of the Rose; and his *Dit du Florin*, perhaps his best piece, is but one of those conventional outbursts of verse emphasis allowed to all poets of that Garden who have lost their purse or have been cheated of their reward. Deschamps, also called Morel (*c.* 1345-*c.* 1415), traditionally described as the pupil of another poet of Champagne, Guillaume de Machaut, represents the more critical side of contemporary literature. For, though in the matter of form he belongs to the lyrical school of which Machaut was master and Froissart, Christine de Pisan, and Charles d'Orléans the aptest pupils, he rhymes in a vein which is too cynical, too real, almost too modern, for even a decadent chivalry. His work is essentially occasional. He has written over a thousand ballades, and his only long poem, the *Miroir de Mariage*, is, by its very length, its title, and above all its tone, a flout at the passing age,—aptly described by M. Lanson as Boileau's Tenth Satire in the fourteenth-century manner. His happiest piece is a

Deschamps as a poet.

[1] *I.e., Jeunesse.*

virelai "Sui-je, sui-je, sui-je belle," in daintiness not far behind the art of Charles d'Orléans.[1]

Christine de Pisan.

Christine de Pisan (*c.* 1363-1435)[2] is least interesting as a poetess. Her story of misfortune, which is both more pathetic and probably more authentic than the frequent poetic autobiographies, tells how she, left penniless in early widowhood with three children, took pen in hand and won an unwilling Court. There is nothing striking or unexpected in her Muse, a confessed follower of Deschamps, either in subject or treatment; but there is the accidental interest that she was the first woman-writer in France. In her first ballade, inspired by the memory of her deceased husband, she indulges the commonplaces of personal sorrow, but in her later writings she adopts a more critical attitude. These may be divided into three classes—the purely professional hack-work of translation and compilation, the defence of her sex against the satire of the second part of the *Roman de la Rose*, and the patriotic verse concluding with the song in honour of the Maid of Orléans. Much of the first is in prose, but the *Mutacion de Fortune* (1403) is a verse treatise of the usual encyclopædic type, prefaced by some personal details, in which she refers, among other things, to her *métier* as a writer, by saying, "I was a woman: but I have become a man." In her attack on Jean

[1] Deschamps has left a ballade in praise of Chaucer ("Grant translateur").

[2] Ed. Maurice Roy (Soc. des anc. textes français), Paris, 1886. Christine was an Italian by birth, and daughter of the astrologer of Charles V.

de Meun, however, she had not forgotten her sex. Jean's audacity[1] had, as we have seen, called forth not a few champions, but the ladies had remained silent. Christine's position was inconsistent with the antique ideals which she upheld, but it showed how the times were altering. In the *Epistre au* [*du*] *Dieu d'Amours* she laments the shame done in the name of love in the ribald and cynical adventures of the popular Muse, and in the *Dit de la Rose* she points the finger at those who would forget the honour due to pure affection. The latter is a simple allegory describing an order or society into which only those who will be true knights may be admitted. She shows her direct intention by making the Rose the badge to be worn by each member of the brotherhood. To us the more interesting fact is that the traditional view had now become a matter of controversy, as is shown by her *Dit* having called forth a series of letters in defence of the abused Jean by two secretaries of Charles VI., Jean de Montreuil and Gonthier Col. Both attack and defence show clearly enough that the early fifteenth century had already divined the true drift of the reactionary of the thirteenth.[2] Chris-

The chivalric ideal.

[1] Jean had been praised by Honoré Bonet (?1340-1405), prior of Salon, in his *Apparition de Jean de Meung*. See also p. 342.

[2] Jean de Montreuil's three letters in defence of the *Roman de la Rose* and Jean de Meun are printed in the second volume of Dom Martene's *Amplissima Collectio*. The further documents of the *querelle* are as yet only in MS. (See the *résumé* of a lecture by M. Petit de Julleville, *Revue des Cours &c.*, 1896, No. 29, and A. Piaget's *Études romanes*, 1891, pp. 113-120.) Gerson joined in by attacking the *Roman* in his Sermon against Luxury (*Works*, vol. iii.)

tine continued her philosophy of love in the prose *Cité des Dames* and the *Livre des Trois Vertus ou Trésor de la Cité des Dames.* Something of the same bias is shown in her *Livre des faits et bonnes mœurs du sage roi Charles V.* (1404), in which she emphasises the king's chivalrous bearing.[1] The rude times of the civil war and the English invasion diverted her patrons' interest from her learned book-making. After writing a *Lamentation* (1410) and the *Livre de la Paix* (1413), she remained silent for a long time, secluded in a religious house. There she heard of the vision of Jean d'Arc and fittingly concluded her labours with a pæan on the soldier-maid. Taking her work as a whole, we shall find her at her best in the lyrical measures, chiefly of her apprenticeship, as, for example, the rondeau bearing the refrain—

"Com turtre suis sanz per toute seulete."

She never reaches a high level, and she will interest posterity chiefly by reason of her intelligence, her learning, her industry, and her instinct for professional authorship, such as was possible to the men of her time. Her *Proverbes Moraulx*, a sequel to her *Enseignemens Moraulx*, was translated into English by the cultured Earl of Rivers and was one of the first issues from Caxton's press.

Professional authorship.

Alain Chartier (*c.* 1390-?1435)[2] shows greater merit as a prose-writer than as a poet, yet it was by reason of the "mots doréz et belles sentences" of his care-

[1] *Infra*, chap. xi.

[2] Ed. André du Chesne, Paris, 1617, 1 vol.

ful verse that he won the applause of his century, and, according to a persistent but impossible anecdote, received on his "precious mouth" the kiss of the Dauphine Margaret, daughter of the poet James I., King of Scots.[1] If his verses are poor, they are at least noteworthy as being completely typical of the poetic mood of the century. In a sense he is the master of the fifteenth century *school* of poets, though the term is less applicable to that century than it is to the later eras of spiritual mediocrity which enjoy the formal tyranny of Marot, Ronsard, or Malherbe: for he determined and continued that fashion of dandified inanity against which Villon, with the futility of original genius, could avail nought. It has disconcerted some later French critics that he, a Norman, should have busied himself in the very midst of the horrors of the English invasion with the frigid artificialities of the *Livre des Quatre Dames.*[2] He was the better poet for that, in the strictest mediæval sense, and too much "the father of French rhetoric" to disturb the lovers with the din of Agincourt. Poetry had not yet become the pulse of each day's fever, but remained the pastime and pattern of a chivalric ideal; and a pedant like Chartier would preserve the traditions of his order with all the greater fastidiousness. He does not, however, make a mere replica. His pedantry lies

Alain Chartier.

His pedantry.

[1] The literary taste of Margaret and of her two sisters should suggest to some modern sceptics that the ladies' father, James I., King of Scots, had some chance of being a poet too.

[2] The references to Agincourt bear only on the *personal* sorrow of the ladies. Chartier made amends in his prose and in his Latin epistle on the Maid of Orléans.

in his studied words and phrases; he is less careful of the traditional details of the allegorical poets than of the general doctrine that poetry has a specific character and must stand apart from real life. Even in his political prose there is something of this æsthetic generalisation, which is absent in the straightforward annals of Froissart or the impassioned arguments of Christine de Pisan. The *Livre des Quatre Dames*, which describes the mourning of four ladies for their knights who have been killed or taken at Agincourt, is constructed in the conventional manner, with the stereotyped setting of the "merry month" as we find it in the *Romance of the Rose*. In the verses scattered throughout his *Espérance*[1] he elaborates the common topic of the vanity of human affairs. A remarkable feature of his work is the almost absolute uniformity of all his efforts whether in spirit or in treatment, in *La Belle Dame Sans Mercy*, *Le Parlement d'Amour* and the others,—the *Livre des Quatre Dames* alone showing some variation.

Uniformity of effort.

But not less remarkable is the way in which he has imposed this character upon the thought and technique of his contemporaries and successors both in France and abroad.

His influence.

Nowadays we have forgotten Chartier except for the dainty fiction of the Dauphine's kiss, which later poetry seems loath to lose.[2] Charles d'Orléans (1391-1464), on the other hand, who left no influence on his own time, and remained unknown to the world of letters till the

Charles d'Orléans.

[1] Or *Consolation des Trois Vertus*.

[2] Cf. Victor Hugo, *Lucrèce Borgia*, I. ii.

eighteenth century, has aroused an editorial interest which is perhaps exaggerated.[1] In this respect, as well as in the matter of style and subject, he supplies a literary analogy to James I., King of Scots, his fellow-prisoner in England. The silence of contemporaries regarding both is remarkable, and it has tempted some modern critics to unhistorical conclusions.[2] For it must be remembered that a Prince's indulgence in love-verses, or even in 'flytings' with his courtiers, was a private matter of the Court, and in no sense the result of any professional intention. The possession or the perusal of a copy of the royal poems implied a direct royal favour; and the poet-annalists (for the most part courtiers) would not so far forget themselves as to include their master in their list of his minstrels, or even think it necessary to enlarge in separate stanzas on his claims as a poet. It is also to be remembered that the introduction of printing had quite a contrary effect on the reputation of princely authors to what it had on popular craftsmanship. It introduced conditions which were too disturbing to that poetic ease, which, in the case of such as Charles d'Orléans, was almost impossible outside the luxurious privacy of an illuminated manuscript.[3] The fact is less

[1] The handiest and best edition is that of the *Collection Jannet*, ed. D'Héricault, 2 vols., 1874.

[2] The lack of contemporary mention of James I. has been construed by some as a proof against his authorship of the *Kingis Quair* (*ante*, p. 40).

[3] M. de Montaiglon points out that this explains the action of Francis I. when he caused the poems of Villon to be printed, but not the poems of his grand-uncle, which he certainly knew.

surprising in the case of a poet of the type of Charles d'Orléans, who amused himself at a time when the older chivalric tastes were retreating to the châteaux before the prosaic and *bourgeois* fashions of the mid-century. His position in the history of French verse is like that of Hawes in English; much of the beauty of his work lies in the glamour which, clinging to ideas and forms that are passing away, mellows the dying art of the Middle Ages. Artificial, unimpassioned, even bookish, as the verse of Orléans appears to modern readers, it is quite different from the soulless *pastiches* of the rhetorical school which succeeded. He is a sincere allegorist; his inspiration comes from the *Roman de la Rose*; the lyrical forms of Machaut and Deschamps are his immediate models. He lives entirely in this world of art, indifferent to serious personal misfortunes or to the political promptings of his position. Nor does he take refuge in poetry as a means to vent his sorrows: like Alain Chartier, but with greater capacity, though with greater difficulty, he endeavours to live the ideal life apart. In some respects he shows the quality which distinguishes the classic and which might have commended itself to Boileau, had that critic's knowledge of French verse gone further back than Villon; but it is an excellence of daintiness, of workmanship on a small scale. He has been called in modern phrase a "poète amateur" and a "poète d'album,"[1] either of which fitly expresses the *motif* and limitations of his verse.

His position in French poetry.

The quality of his art.

[1] So D'Héricault, I. viii.

The authentic works of Charles d'Orléans are grouped under five heads: the *Poème de la Prison*, *Ballades*, *Complaintes*, *Chansons* and *Caroles*, and *Rondeaux*. The first, a record of love-sentiment, similar in occasion and treatment to the *Quair* of James I., King of Scots, can hardly be called a sustained poem, but rather a miscellany of short pieces, including no less than eighty ballades. The other divisions, as the titles imply, consist of short poems in conventional lyrical form,—the last, the longest, containing over three hundred rondeaux. As far as length is concerned, the poems would seem to fall more into the category of the later Transition, which was signally impatient of the long-drawn delights of the Middle Ages; but their literary character entirely falsifies this assumption. They are only in the most accidental sense occasional, if indeed they are so at all. Even the mistress for whom he sighs and whose death he laments is a very shadowy being. So indifferent to detail and yet so formally chivalrous is he, that it is hard to say whether she is a real lover or a blurred composite of several dames. There is the same difficulty with James's Joan Beaufort, but in a lesser degree. In the *Complainte de France*, for which Charles d'Orléans had incident and colour to hand as few men have had, he gives us but a decorative panel in subdued monotone. Throughout all his poems it is ever Nonchaloir, Liesse, Dangier, Destresse, and the other respectabilities of the old allegory. He lives in the past, and when in his later years, amid his poet-retainers at the Court of

Blois, he says less chivalrous things about women, it is that he may praise the more the dames of old, rather than sneer with the cynics of his day.

"Par les fenestres de mes yeulx,
Ou temps passé, quant regardoye,
Advis m'estoit, ainsi m'ait Dieux,
Que de trop plus belles véoye
Qu'à present ne fais : mais j'estoye
Ravy en plaisir et lyesse,
Es mains de ma Dame Jeunesse."[1]

The rascal genius whom he entertained at Blois has also given us a ballade, the immortal *Dames du temps jadis*, which, both in intention and in its touch with real life, is the modern antithesis of the prince's dreaming. The reputation of Charles d'Orléans must rest chiefly on the delicate touch and metrical felicity of his verses, as in these—

"Le voulez-vous,
Que vostre soye ?
Rendu m'ottroye,
Pris ou recous.

Ung mot pour tous,
Bas, qu'on ne l'oye :
Le voulez-vous,
Que vostre soye ?

Maugré jaloux,
Foy vous tendroye :
Or ça, ma joye,
Accordons-nous,
Le voulez-vous ?"

There is something of the South in the lightness of

[1] Ballade xxii.

his fancy, as when he describes the coming of the "fourriers d'Esté," or

> "Ce joyeux temps du jour d'uy
> Que le mois de may ce commance
> Et que l'en doit laissier Ennuy,
> Pour prandre Joyeuse Plaisance."[1]

No northern poet of his time has so daintily caught the varied harmonies of the Troubadours, or rivalled their facility in scores of ballades and rondeaux. It is not idle to speculate that had French literature felt the influence of this poet towards the end of the century, when it was turning amiably to Italian classicism, it might have escaped not a little of the dulness and pedantry of the *Rhétoriqueurs*. His delicate musical sense marks him off from his heavier contemporaries; but, though it gives him the distinction of being pleasingly unique, it does not prove his genius. His so-called English poems may be passed by.[2] Whether they are original or translated is still an international question among the antiquaries.[3]

Unique and without influence.

It but emphasises the exceptional charm of the work of Charles d'Orléans to turn to the verses of Martin Lefranc (? 1410-1461) and Martial d'Auvergne (? 1430-1508). The former, provost of the chapter of Lausanne, wrote the *Champion des Dames*, in which, in twenty-four thousand

Martin Lefranc.

[1] *Poème de la Prison*, Ballade xvii.

[2] See the edition of Champollion-Figeac.

[3] So, too, the prose *Débat des Hérauts d'Armes*, in praise of France against England, has been attributed with small reason to the Prince.

verses, he re-rhymed the platitudes of his age on the goodness and badness of women, on life, politics, and the art of the poet. He is generously allowed some ability in the careful manufacture of verses after a single pattern, which M. Petit de Julleville suggests may have been modelled on the rhythmic prose of Alain Chartier.[1] Martial d'Auvergne or Martial de Paris, a procurator of Parliament, runs him close with the fifteen thousand lines of his *Vigilles de la Mort du Roy Charles VII.*,[2] an historical poem for the most part in octosyllabic quatrains, but interspersed with verses, in lyrical measures, on a variety of topics. It is, taken as a whole, a laboured composition: his happiest effort is the *Arrêts d'Amour*, which, like so much of the best work of the poets of this period, is in prose. He may be the author of *Amant rendu Cordelier à l'Observance d'Amours*,[3] which gives internal proofs of kinship with the *Arrêts*. In its octaves there is a finer spirit of sarcasm and a fuller analysis of the hackneyed love-problems than we find in the actual disciples of Jean de Meun. In some of the lyrical passages of the dull *Vigilles* he shows a lightness of touch resembling that of Charles d'Orléans.

Martial d'Auvergne.

Of the minor writers who assisted during this first period in the elaboration of the dream-allegory and the ritual of the *Cours d'Amour*, the chief are Jean de Garencières (*fl.* 1420),

Minor Allegorists.

[1] See the account in Petit de Julleville, *Hist. de litt. fr.*, ii. 380-384. There would appear to be no later edition than that of 1530.

[2] Paris, 1724.

[3] Ed. Montaiglon (Soc. des anc. textes français), 1881.

Michault Taillevent, or Le Caron (*d.* ? 1458), and Pierre Michault (*fl.* 1420).[1]

Towards the mid-century the evidences of the changes at work in French literature are more definite. Mediævalism died hardest in the verse, the most formal of the literary arts. As the century draws to a close, prose and the drama have strayed far afield; but the verse of Villon, the lonely harbinger of the modern spirit, is succeeded by the neo-mediævalism of the *Rhétoriqueurs*. Yet the forces of change were at work in the verse, though belated and thwarted for a time by the reaction caused by activity in the companion spheres of prose and drama. In the first place, the double content of the *Roman de la Rose* compelled an ultimate revolution in literary taste. The early defenders of the *règles courtoises* failed to see the general principle which lay behind the criticism of the cynics and would-be misogynists, with whom they disputed in dilettante fashion. In the second place, the social turmoil of the time hastened the disintegration. Political events were, as we have seen, small in influence; even the heroism of the Maid of Orléans could not reinspire the chivalry of the older muse. But the national misery, the stern realism of popular suffering, as pictured in the *Dittamondo* of the traveller Fazio degli Uberti, was too rude and pressing to find relief from the physician Nonchaloir or from Dam Prieur. If the effect could not well be at first positive, in turning the poets to patriotic themes,

II. The mid-century.

[1] See *Romania*, vols. xxii. pp. 422-481, and xviii. pp. 439-452.

it could not fail to be negative in emphasising the anachronism of their ideal. Evidence of internal literary change may be observed in different directions, even very early in the century. The subjects of allegory, never characterised by much variety, tend to be selected from a yet narrower range. This was of course a natural result of the conventionalising of the story of the *Rose*. Further, there are signs, here and there, of restlessness, of inability on the part of the poets to hold out in their greatest efforts till they got, so to speak, their second wind, and, like Martin Lefranc, outsped the reader's patience. There is a growing liking for shorter poems and shorter measures, for more disjointed studies, for passages which would be quotable. It is worthy of remark that the best portion of the verse, which is for the most part amatory in the strictly mediæval sense, commends itself by this quality. For this reason the sparkle of Charles d'Orléans might be considered less as eccentric than as symptomatic of a general process. Again, the change in the poetic *personnel* is noteworthy, for the traditional office of the nobles and clergy was falling more and more into the keeping of notaries, procurators of Parliament, and respectable burgesses, and even, to its great glory, of a Paris gaolbird. Charles d'Orléans sustained the honour of the châteaux, yet restlessly and with a sneaking fondness for the company of the rougher sort. Philip, Duke of Burgundy, endeavoured to revive the outworn chivalry of the crusading

Indications of change.

Curtailment in form.

Change in literary personnel.

days, and, like James IV., King of Scots, to restore the ceremonial of the Round Table and the Court of Charlemagne. But though the writers at his Court followed suit and, under the leadership of the Fleming Georges Chastellain, revelled to excess in the romances and love-courtesies of the older poetry—David Aubert in his *Trois Fils de Rois*, Antoine de la Salle in his *Histoire du Petit Jehan de Saintré*, Jean Molinet, Jean le Maire, and others,—they were spiritually out of touch with their models. The Burgundian Court became, indeed, the nursery of the professional *Rhétoriqueurs*. Others elsewhere, as the Duc de Berri, the Comte d'Eu, and the Marshal Bouciqualt, broke a lance in the old lists. A further cause which helped to determine the fate of the traditional poetry was the growing alienation of the leading poets in favour of prose. The writers of the most meritorious verse, such as Chartier and d'Auvergne, have earned a higher reputation by their prose than by their verse. The older romances which were rehandled during this century are written almost entirely in prose. This fashion was both the result of the spreading *bourgeois* spirit and the cause of its further increase at the expense of the formal verse. It was one of the effects of the encyclopædic style which had been creeping into the poetry of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, due partly to the chaos in the formation of the vernacular, and to a greater extent to the literary appetite for *études intimes* of the miseries and humours of workaday France.

The alienation from verse.

The character of the change was twofold. It was individual, in antithesis to the uniformity of earlier method; and it showed a width of range which was also incompatible with prevailing practice. These literary tendencies were the counterpart of what was happening in the political life of Europe, where the personal power and the extended influence of the monarchy were everywhere in the ascendant, and in which municipal and local influences had grown strong in the conflict between kingship and feudalism.[1] This individualism showed not only the faults which inevitably accompany the break of an unreasoned restraint, but the harsher qualities of cynicism and coarseness which characterised the age. Individualism meant criticism, and criticism to *bourgeois* Paris meant but to laugh more loudly or sneer more heartily than Jean de Meun had ventured to do. The assertion of this spirit marks the beginning of the modern period in a more emphatic way than in other contemporary literatures. Villon is the first of the older writers who can be sympathetically interpreted by later times, the first who shows those qualities which distinguish the modern from the mediæval; but this appreciation of him, or rather of his era, is intensified by the fact that the methods by which the fifteenth century chose most fully to express its delight in the new were imposed so strongly on the time that they have become and remain to this day the chief

The character of the change.

[1] Literature in France follows in the wake of this municipal independence. Each city or district has its group. See the classification in the first volume of Crépet's *Poètes français.*

characteristics of French literary art. The most immediate and important effects are not to be found in the poetry. Though Villon is remarkable above all others for the individuality of his treatment, he certainly shows no advance in range of subject. Moreover, he is unique: his contemporaries and successors fall back, till the coming of the Renaissance, upon a modified or aggravated form of the traditional style. The true development of the modern spirit is found in the prose, but most emphatically in the drama. Poetry played no part in the crisis which determined once for all the permanent leading forms and the *leit-motiv* of French literature,—the dramatic and prose styles and the indefinable *génie narquois*. In this restricted sense we say that no literature has so absolutely preserved the initial phase of its modern style as the French has done. And it has escaped, by the marvellous felicity of its art, the numbing formalism which destroyed all that was best in the mediæval spirit.

The determination of the later development of French literature.

The early recognition of Villon's position in French letters is noteworthy. Clement Marot prepared, at the request of Francis I., an edition of his poems in 1532, in which, as he explains in an interesting preface, he piously endeavoured to purify the text of "nostre Villon" from its many corruptions. The Pléiade and its followers, as was to be expected, held him in some contempt,[1] but

François Villon.

[1] Thus Du Verdier expresses his astonishment that Marot should have interested himself in "un si goffe ouvrier . . . ce qui ne vaut rien."

Boileau confirmed and established the earlier verdict in the famous passage on the history of French versification.[1] Of the story of the life of this François Villon, or de Montcorbier, or Corbeueil, or Corbier (1431-? 1462) there is no lack of studies. It is probably true that it is by his evil-doing that he has been found out, and that by his picturesque iniquity, as much as by his poetic merit, which is obscured by uncouth terms and lost allusions, he holds his position in history.[2] His genuine work is not large in bulk—the *Petit Testament*, the *Grand Testament*, and a few ballads. Some pieces in his manner, or illustrative of him, have been erroneously attributed to him (though in the earliest editions they were carefully placed at the end): these include the historic *Repeues franches*, the *Franc archier de Bagnolet*, and probably most of the verses in *jobelin* or *argot*. The *Petit Testament*, written in 1456, is a rather tiresome piece, in forty stanzas of eight-rhymed octosyllabics (*ababbcbc*) describing in the 'comic' manner of his century the author's would-be bequests to his friends. The *Grand Testament*, his greatest effort, is written in 173 stanzas of the same variety, in which are interpolated a number of ballades and rondeaux. It is really a miscellany of short poems written at different times, and is both in respect of its parts and of their grouping intensely original and personal. For

The Grand Testament.

[1] *L'Art poétique*, i. 117, 118.

[2] The late Mr R. L. Stevenson's essay illustrates this. The best life is by A. Longnon, Paris, 1877. The editions of the poems are numerous: the best for reference are by Jacob, 1854, and Longnon, 1877.

though it is full of the familiar sentiments on the flight of time, the uncertainty of things human, death, and faded beauty, varied by the coarse merriment of the taverns, it is intensely fresh and vivid, and, in the very jumble of its moods, a true human document.

One would fain construe Boileau's couplet as a statement that Villon infused into his time, which still preserved the traditions of the "vieux romanciers," the clear direct spirit of individuality and humanity; but this apology is impossible in the light of Boileau's magnificent ignorance and his clearness of expression. Villon certainly has no claim to the credit of having "disembroiled" French verse from formal confusion, for the verses and methods which he used had been fully elaborated in the discredited past. It is the same historical error which cumbers the enthusiasm for the genius of Dante or of Burns, and disturbs the popular estimate of Dunbar. Like Dunbar, and Skelton too in some respects, Villon accepted the artistic conventions of his predecessors. The *testament* or *lais*[1] was, as we have seen, an honoured mediæval form in which the satirist and cynic found scope for ridicule, hard hitting, and sometimes private confession. The *ballade* and *rondeau* had been favourite forms for more than a century. Many of the pictorial details in the passages on love, death, fortune, and the pleasures of life are but studio-traditions; and even the trick of interrogation, which he uses with such effect in the *Ballade des Dames du*

The historical basis of his work.

[1] =*legs*—*i.e.*, "bequest."

temps jadis, will be found in earlier monkish verse. Strictly, therefore, he did not discover a new formal art, as Boileau ignorantly thought. His merit is greater, for he transmuted the older forms, in the sense that he gave them a deeper artistic significance as the medium of more individual and subtle ideas. No small part of his charm lies in the success with which he has infused the modern spirit into the old ways. If he has chosen the form of the 'Testament,' he has, in Sainte-Beuve's witty phrase, sealed it; and if S. Bernard's

> "Dic, ubi Tullius, clarus eloquio?
> Vel Aristoteles, summo ingenio?"[1]

anticipates the manner of his great ballade, it will not explain the burden

> "Mais où sont les neiges d'antan,"

which illumines and completes the poem, both spiritually and formally.[2]

The last outpost of the modern spirit.

It is for reasons of this sort that Villon is not only a modern, but the last outpost of the modern spirit in French literature. Charles d'Orléans, who might precede him in Boileau's formal category, lives in a different atmosphere; not because he is a courtly trouvère and Villon a

[1] From the *Rhythmus de Contemptu Mundi.*

[2] "Il faudrait que saint Bernard eût terminé sa kyrielle de noms par un vers tel que celui-ci, ou approchant:

'Ast ubi nix vetus, tam effusibilis?'

ce qu'il n'a pas fait."—(Sainte-Beuve, *Causeries du Lundi*, xiv. 298.)

man of the Quartier, but because he is essentially mediæval. Villon's individuality and humanity separate him from the early fifteenth century; and we call him modern because these qualities suggest the characteristics of the simpler Renaissance, untouched by the influence of classical culture. He is the expression of no process; his genius is but personal intensity, uninfluenced and uninfluencing; he is one of those bright particular stars, like Dunbar and Skelton of his century, which shine alone. He might have been the poet of the *bourgeoisie* and remained to us a mere pothouse cynic, but he transcends the meanness of his *Grosse Margot* mood;[1] he might have been lost to us in forgotten allusions and obscure vocabulary, had he not passed beyond the merely real to the actuality of things. Historical criticism will find Villon in closest touch with the literary tendencies of his time in two ways — in the short lyrical character of his work (for the *Grand Testament* is but a masterly mosaic), and in the dramatic intention of his genius, which, if unexpressed in definite form, was at one with the popular instinct. In other essential characteristics he stands aloof. The grim gallows-ballade which he made for himself and his comrades is something more than the century's masterpiece in the *art macabre*. The swinging of their own carrion under the cross-tree is a Dance of Death utterly beyond the most hysterical moments of popular imagination. It is the same individual

His personal intensity.

His contemporary qualities.

[1] *Grand Testament*, after st. 140.

quality which separates his naïve reflections on his criminal soul from the rather priggish memorabilia of verse of the *Male Regle* type.

King René.

The other outstanding individuality of the mid-period is King René of Anjou (1409-1480), "le bon roy René" of famous memory. He too stands aloof from the process of his age, but in a different way. We think of him, as we find him in *Anne of Geierstein*, sunning himself in his "chimney" and "nursing his poetical vein," in happy indifference to such worries as absorbed his neighbour of France. Personally the most ill-starred of petty monarchs in his kinship and political fortunes, he looks out from his parapet on the brightest of worlds and the loyalest of peoples. His prospect of things intellectual and æsthetic is the same. There is no hint of the restlessness of the modern spirit, and no quixotic ardour for even the old ways. His mood is not exactly optimistic, but rather one of sheer conservative contentment. He busies himself with architecture, painting, verse-making, and dramatic displays, and he inspires his little court with his fancies. He has the instinct of the artist without the creative power. His very happy-go-lucky mood, by which he won the affection of contemporaries and of posterity, was a barrier to his reaching beyond the narrow experience of the dilettante. He is in no sense a propagandist. When he is allegorical—and he is so persistently—it is simply because the fashion of the *Rose* has not yet gone out, in the châteaux at least; and when he mingles his verse with prose, and even

condescends to a prose treatise, it is not that he has a defined taste, much less an academic concern, in the matter, like other French poets outside as well as within the sacred circle of the *Rhétoriqueurs*. To the literary historian the chief interest of his work is the absence of any indication of those fervours which give historical colour and meaning to the medley of the Transition, and which in the greater artists like Villon have the quality of a *Weltschmerz*; and it is perhaps the lack of this which has consigned the gentle stirrings of René's muse to a too severe oblivion.

His chief works[1] are the *Livre du Cuer d'Amours Espris* (1457) and *Regnault et Jeanneton* (*c.* 1460). The first is an allegorical dream in which the good knight Cuer battles for his dame Doulce-Mercy and finds adventure with Tristesse, Souci, and others, just as the Gawains and Lancelots had done in Arthurian story. René indeed admits his indebtedness to the Round Table for more than the main outline. The piece is a mixture of prose and verse, and is at its best in the prose. In these respects it suggests a parallel with Sannazaro and Sidney, just as in its Arthurianism it is a simple prelude to the *Faerie Queene*. *Regnault et Jeanneton* or *Les amours du bergier et de la bergeronne* is a pastoral or idyllic poem, in which the poet is supposed, though for slender reasons, to celebrate his second marriage. Here, if anywhere, René seems to

[1] The only complete edition of René is by the Comte de Quatrebarbes, 4 vols., 1843-46. M. Lecoy de la Marche has given a valuable account of his life and work in 2 vols., Paris, 1875. Villeneuve-Bargemont's volume (1825) is untrustworthy.

be touched by the spirit of the Renaissance, for his mediæval love of chivalry and the "May-morning" conventions of the older poetry is leavened by a certain classicism; but this quality is rather to be explained as a common characteristic of all bucolic poetry than as the result of any direct influence. The same applies to his verses in another pastoral, *Le Pas de la Bergerie.* Another work, *Le Mortifiement de Vaine Plaisance* (*c.* 1454) is an allegorical piece, not in the Arthurian style, but more akin to the *mystère* or even the *conte* in its complicated movement of abstractions like Foi, Amour, and Contrition. *L'Abusé en Court* (1473), which has been ascribed to Dom Jean, monk of Haute Seille in Lorraine, and also to Charles de Rochefort, is a satirical allegory on the favourite theme of Courts and the fortunes of courtiers. It is foolish, and probably wrong, to look for any *personalia* in this piece; there is nothing, except an occasional incisive phrase, which distinguishes it from the conventions of any other Polonius of the century. Both works are a pot-pourri of prose and verse. His only prose work, apart from Letters, is a *Traicté de la forme et devis d'ung tournois* (*c.* 1450), but it has no value as literature. His *Rondeaux* (*c.* 1450) and minor verse are of poor quality. The dramatic side of his work, on which Sir Walter Scott has laid some emphasis, is more difficult to define, though Jean Bouchet states in his *Annales d'Aquitaine* that he wrote several plays. He is said to have supplied the outline of the mystery of the *Actes des Apôtres* (1478) to Jean le Prieur, and

also that of *Roy Advenir*.[1] We can imagine that the old dandy controlled the spectacular arrangement, and left the Scripture paraphrase and local references—when the "chimney" was not inspiring—to courtiers like Jean le Prieur or Antoine de la Salle, or even to birds of passage like Villon.

III. The close of the century.

The verse of the closing century shows two phases; on the one hand the continuation of the *bourgeois* manner, further confirmed in its tendency to express itself in dramatic form, and, on the other hand, the reactionary artificiality of the *Rhétoriqueurs*.[2]

Guillaume Coquillart.

In the first, Coquillart and Baude are the most representative. Guillaume Coquillart (1421-1510),[3] a native of Rheims, was a canon and a lawyer. His municipal enthusiasm made him a good *bourgeois*, and, as a man of letters, a satirist and supporter of the popular stage. Only his poems remain: the *Droitz Nouveaulx* (in two parts), the *Playdoyer d'entre la Simple et la Rusée* (followed by an *Enqueste*), the *Blason des Armes et des Dames*, the *Monologue Coquillart* (and perhaps the *Monologue de Puys*, and the *Monologue des Perruques* or *du Gendarme cassé*), and a few minor

[1] *V.* Lecoy de la Marche, *u.s.*

[2] Sainte-Beuve confesses, in his general sketch in Crépet, that this period bores him, and he passes direct to Marot. But it is rather unpardonable that M. Petit de Julleville, in his monumental History of French Literature, should crush Chastellain, Meschinot, Molinet, Baude, and Saint-Gelais into a small-type footnote of a dozen and a half lines.

[3] Ed. D'Héricault (Bibl. Elzév.), 2 vols., 1857.

pieces, chiefly in the ballade form. In the first three he continues the mediæval style—in the *Droitz* and *Playdoyer* in *pros* and *cons* worthy of the Courts of Love, and in the *Blason*, a variant of the old *dit*, in a scholastic disputation between the *procureurs* for War and Love; but his vein is strongly satirical, and his metaphors, often obscure to us, are drawn from the life of the law-courts, or of the shopkeepers and wenches of Rheims. He is most successful in the monologue, of which he may be said to be the inventor, a half-way form between the old-fashioned *conte* and the later *farce*, and essentially dramatic in *motif*. The *Gendarme cassé*, if it be his, is his best piece, unstinted in the vehemence and pointedness of its attack on the Cochinnarts and fellow *gens d'armes* who had ill-used the good folks of Rheims. Nevertheless, his satire is relieved by a certain vivacity, which, united with an undoubted rhythmical ease, produces a few passages of delicate touch, as in his description of some ladies—

"Si coinctes, si polies, si frisques,
Si plaines de doulces amours,
Si propres pour trouver replicques,
Si promptes pour donner secours,
Si humaines à gens de Cours,
Si usitées de leur babil,
Si duictes pour trouver des tours."[1]

He is always poking fun at the "gentilles Galloises" with the like cynical intent with which he attacks the higher clergy, the bench, the university doctors, and indeed everybody; and even when he craves the

[1] *Le Blason.*

forgiveness of the fair sex he is, we fear, naughtily impenitent.

Henri Baude.

Henri Baude (1430-?1495) has been known only since 1848, and has been but partially edited.[1] He is like Coquillart in his dramatic quality, though his comic vein is more marked; but he is more restrained in his metaphorical flights. His simplicity and straightforwardness of style suggest, though with necessary qualifications, the directness of Villon. He is perhaps not fairly to be judged by his *Lamentations Bourrien* and his *Regrets en rondeau sur l'éloignement d'une demoiselle accomplie.*

The Grands Rhétoriqueurs.

The *Grands Rhétoriqueurs* would seem to owe their traditional title to Coquillart, who, in the opening passage of his *Droitz Nouveaulx*, not inaptly sums up their family-character—

> "Orateurs, grans rhetoriqueurs
> Garnis de langues esclatantes;
> Aprenés noz modes fringantes
> Et noz parolles elegantes,
> Noz raisons, noz termes juristes.
> Noz sciences vous sont duisantes,
> Et nos traditives plaisantes,
> Et noz enseignemens bien mistes."

Their protest.

One general principle lay behind the protest of this school — a rather snobbish dislike of the *bourgeois* tendencies which were spreading in French literature. This protest took several forms. It emphasised the fondness for the Latinised vocabulary which had amused Alain Chartier, and

[1] Ed. Quicherat, Paris, 1856.

grew so popular that Rabelais could very justly make Pantagruel exclaim, "Quel diable de langaige est cecy!"[1] French verse, like the Limousin student, set itself to "despumate the Latial verbocination," and was sorely in need of the critical throttle which forced that pedant to a simple vernacular. In addition to this, the *Rhétoriqueurs* outdid the earlier writers of the century in excessive allegory, and revived and re-adapted all the tricks of the artificial poetry; thus endeavouring by the first to thwart the realism of the popular verse and drama, and by the second to prove that poetry was not the formless thing of the dialogues of pastry-cooks and vintners. It was really the dying protest of literary feudalism. Its chief centre of activity was the Court of Burgundy, where Georges Chastellain (1403-1475) was *arbiter elegantiarum*. French literary historians have conspired to forget him, perhaps because he was a Fleming as well as a bad poet.[2] His aptest pupil at that Court was Jean Molinet (*d.* 1507), who in his *Faits et Dits*[3] shows all the worst faults of the artificial school, with little to choose between unintelligible subtleties and the puerilities of mere punning, as when he complains (and justly) that he has not "son moulin net." In direct descent from him comes Jean le Maire de Belges (1475-?1524, ?1548),[4] author of the *Temple d'Honneur et de Vertus*, but he belongs rather to the sixteenth century. Molinet's influence

The Burgundians.

[1] II. vi. An echo of Geoffroy Tory.
[2] Ed. Kervyn de Lettenhove, Brussels, 1867-68.
[3] Paris, 1531.
[4] Ed. Stecher, Louvain, 1882-85.

extended to the French Court, where Guillaume Crétin won great honour among the *Rhétoriqueurs* for his *Chants royaux.* He is now remembered only as the 'old poet Raminagrobis' to whom Panurge made pilgrimage.[1] The verses quoted in Rabelais are really Crétin's, and they may be taken as typical of the conceits and punning eccentricities of the school. The young debauchee Octavien de Saint-Gelais (1468-1502), of the house of Lusignan, and nephew of Jean the Chronicler, wrote two poems, both strongly reminiscent of the *Roman de la Rose*: *La Chasse d'Amours*, in two parts, in the second of which he shows his metrical agility by writing every stanza in a different form, and the *Séjour d'Honneur*, an allegorical piece, with prose interpolations. To these poets may be added Jean Meschinot (1420–*c.* 1491), a Breton, author of the *Lunettes des Princes*, Robertet, known also as a letter-writer, Montferrand, a hanger-on of the Duke of Bourbon and author of the *XII Dames de Rhétorique*, Jean Marot, father of Clement, Andrieu de la Vigne, and others.[2] The activity of the school is remarkable, not only in the late fifteenth century, but even well into the sixteenth, throughout the very prolific reign of Louis XII. From Jean Bouchet to Clement Marot French literature has little to show but *œuvres crétiniques et bouchetiques*, and Marot himself, in his earlier

[1] Rabelais, iii. xxi. See Urquhart's clever rendering of the passage. Crétin, like Pantagruel, had been consulted by a friend who had thoughts of marriage. From his poetic reply Rabelais extracts the rondeau of Raminagrobis.

[2] For the texts of the *Rhétoriqueurs* see the *Bibliothèque Elzévirienne.*

work, is a confirmed *rhétoriqueur*. Even the domestic drama of the time attempts a compromise with the exquisites.

Reactionary and morbid as this movement was, it had a positive influence on the development of the national literature. If it was not the cause of the delay in the coming of the Renaissance, it was certainly the means of modifying the character or of stemming the force of that influence. No other literature in the early stages of the Renaissance preserves such a strong flavour of mediævalism, a flavour so persistent that it can be detected later when classicism has obtained the mastery. This is the debt of French literature to Cretinism. Nor is it difficult to see that the very pertinacity of the *Rhétoriqueurs* in their folly had some positive value on the formal side of French art, in helping it to make Pantagruel's student less pedantic and the frighted Limousin less of a lout. It is useless to compare the result with that which fell out in English, for the genius of the two tongues and literatures differed much; but the process in each is the same. French literature was more conscious of the problem, and ultimately set itself the task of explaining its verse in an elaborate prose poetic.

The debt of French literature to Cretinism.

CHAPTER IV.

ITALIAN HUMANISM AND THE ROMANTIC PREPARATION.

THE PROBLEM OF THE VERNACULAR IN ITALY—THE RESTRICTED FUNCTION OF POETRY—TWO STAGES DISCERNIBLE—THE RELATION OF THE HUMANISTIC AND POPULAR ELEMENTS—THE ITALIAN TRANSITION—THE "NATIONAL" PREPARATION—FIRST PERIOD: THE TRADITION OF THE "TRECENTISMO"—THE DANTE CULT—PALMIERI'S 'LA CITTÀ DI VITA'—PETRARCHISM—THE INFLUENCE OF THE 'NOVELLA'—RELIGIOUS VERSE—IL BURCHIELLO—SECOND PERIOD: REALISATION OF THE NATIONAL PRINCIPLE—THE PROBLEM OF FORM—LORENZO, IL MAGNIFICO—THE IDYLLIC—HIS ARTISTIC INSTINCT—HIS CARNIVAL SONGS AND LAUDS—ANGELO POLIZIANO—THE QUESTION OF STYLE—THE 'STANZE'—THE OCTAVE STANZA—THE ART AND MATTER OF POETRY—THE ROMANTIC IDEA—LUIGI PULCI—THE 'MORGANTE MAGGIORE'—BURLESQUE—THE ART AND MATTER OF POETRY AGAIN—MATTEO MARIA BOIARDO—CHIVALRIC TRADITION—ITS MODIFICATIONS—BOIARDO'S ROMANTIC EPIC—MINOR POETS—THE ITALIAN DEATH—GIROLAMO SAVONAROLA—JACOPO SANNAZARO—THE DISCOVERER OF ARCADY—HIS POETIC PURPOSE AND INFLUENCE.

IT is probably true that in fifteenth-century Italy poetry is, in the matter of individual genius, in even sorrier plight than we find it during that time in England or in France; but it is also true that its importance in explaining the ultimate development of

the national spirit is in some respects greater. To a certain extent the state of Italian letters between the age of Dante, Petrarch, and Boccaccio, and that of Ariosto — the poverty of poetic inspiration, accompanied by an aptitude for the drama and a certain talent for prose—is analogous to what we find elsewhere; but the analogy is at best superficial, for the problem of modernity was presented in very different terms to the Italian people, and their solution was distinctive and national. Nowhere else was the struggle between the vernacular and Latin so acute. Other literatures adopted classical forms and words, sometimes with the extreme affectation of the provincial for strange fashions, but never to the undoing of the native character. Italy was the patrimony of the Romans, and their tongue, which had held its position there by the aid of the Church and scholasticism, was the natural medium for the literary aspirations of the New Rome. Even in the fulness of the vernacular glory of the fourteenth century there is an apologetic strain. Dante's Latin plea for the greater nobility of the 'cardinal and aulic' vernacular is rather a patriotic attack on the medley of Italian dialects than a disparagement of the *locutio grammatica*; and Petrarch and Boccaccio, while admitting that Italy had need of both the Latin and the vulgar, placed their highest hopes in a classical revival. The temptation was greater to the *quattrocentisti*; and to it they readily yielded. Not only was the use of Latin an act of self-respect, but it was almost a question of national honour:

The problem of the vernacular in Italy.

to write in the dialects, even in the Tuscan, was a discourtesy to intellectual tradition. The conditions of the struggle emphasised what may be called the self-containedness of the Italian genius. Other nations had come, and would come, to Italy for inspiration. Italian tradition sufficed to the Italians: the fourteenth century had seen the poetry of the universal through the vistas of Florentine gardens. To fifteenth-century Italy the enthusiasm for the ancients was but the pride of ancestry, the recovery of a heritage which they had forgotten;[1] to the rest of Europe the Classical Revival never lost its foreign character. The division of Italian literature into Latin and vernacular is therefore less justified than in the case of other literatures; there is the difference of vocabulary, but the difference in intellectual attitude is less emphatic. Mantuan could not have been more Italian had he written in the vernacular. These notes of contrast may be supplemented by another, that the poetry of the century is not, as in England, the complete and absolute expression of the artistic energies of the nation any more than it had been in the time of the struggle with the Empire or of the troubles in Lombardy, when statecraft and law were the absorbing interests. The Italian of the Renaissance was a scholar, a politician, a builder, above all an artist, rather than a

The restricted function of poetry.

[1] To the Italian peasant of to-day all monuments which he cannot explain are the work of "gli antichi." It is filial admiration, not the historical bluff of our countrymen of a generation or two ago, who referred everything to the Danes or Picts.

maker of verses. The true lyric of the Renaissance vibrates in the colour of its canvases; its epic is Bramante's pile. In art it found its freedom and originality; in literature it hardly escaped from imitation and artificiality. Yet if the latter has given us less pleasure and has had a narrower influence even on the Italian mind, it makes some amends by the readiness with which it explains the process of the preparation and triumph.

Two stages discernible.

The century divides itself into two clear stages. The first, which may quite properly be said to begin at the death of Boccaccio in 1375, extends to the public life of Lorenzo de' Medici; the second, covering the remaining decades, reaches to the Golden Age. They are essentially distinct in character, the one illustrating in the vernacular literature those qualities of mediæval decadence which are common to all literatures during the Transition, the other a phase of national revival which is the beginning of the true Italian Renaissance. The history of the century is the history of the conflict between the energies of Humanism and nationality. The two forces, represented in literature by the Latin and the vernacular, coexist throughout, and determine by their varying relation to each other the character of the epoch. In the first period they are in opposition. Humanistic culture is in the ascendant and is accepted as a substitute for mediæval tradition. This tradition lingers on in the vernacular, depressed alike by the counter-interest in classicism and by internal tendencies to decay.

The relation of the humanistic and popular elements.

The older enthusiasm and asceticism has lost its meaning to the *bourgeois* sensualists who took life like the gossips of the *Decameron*; allegory is attacked by the realism which Boccaccio had imposed on the symbolism of Dante and on the more direct fervours of Petrarch; chivalry, seldom of native inspiration, relies on the forces now on the side of Humanism; and the language which had sufficed for Italy in the hands of the great triumvirate is felt to be a mere Tuscan dialect. All conditions are unstable and negative. This is the Transition Period of Italian Literature. In the second, which may be called the Early Italian Renaissance, these conditions are changed. The humanistic and popular elements are welded together, and the vernacular literature, no longer Tuscan but Italian, starts on a new career. Humanism had aided the realisation of the idea of nationality, such as was hinted earlier in the "Italia mia" of the exiled Petrarch. In the first period the rivalry of the various states prevents the establishment of a centre at which a national literature might arise; in the second the domination of the Medici makes this possible. The interest in Latin still continues, but it becomes more and more the affectation of pure scholarship; the spirit of the Renaissance passes into the popular writing, and creates, in active union with the relics of mediævalism, a national Italian literature. As Humanism is primarily intellectual, the new literature is an intellectualised mediævalism. It is perhaps more correct to say that it is *further* intellectualised,

The Italian Transition.

for the national element had already been divested of much of its original emotional character. It showed little or nothing of the intellectual influence of Dante, who was too much of an aristocrat to an age whose writers were almost entirely "of the people" and would write their burlesques in his *terza rima*. It took nothing from Petrarch but the echoes of his style. Its mood was the mood of Boccaccio and Sacchetti. Its women are the women of the *Corbaccio*; life is the voluptuous dream of the *Filostrato*. In the *Teseide* the poets find the formal model for their romantic epics. Poliziano copies the ballads of Sacchetti. The cynicism and intellectual sensuousness of the *novella* permeates the whole literary atmosphere, and Humanism emphasises the process. There is no more instructive proof of the spiritual change in Italian literature of this time than in the comparison of the older allegory with the fantastic dream of Francesco Colonna,[1] or of the mediæval Roland with the Orlando of Pulci or Boiardo.

The "national" preparation.

The verse of the first period continues, almost in a perfunctory manner, the threefold tradition of the *trecentismo*. Everything is would-be: its Dantesques are a long way from the real Dante; the imitations of the Petrarchisti show but the vice of the quality of style; only in the variants of the *novella* is there any vitality.

First period: the tradition of the trecentismo.

The Dante cult had really expired with the fourteenth century, in the *Dittamondo* of Fazio degli

[1] *Infra*, chap. xii. p. 393.

Uberti, the sonnets of Pieraccio Tedaldi or of Mucchio da Lucca, the *Quadriregio* of Federigo Frezzi da Foligni, and in the verse paraphrases and expositions of the *Divina Commedia* and the rifacimentos of the sentiments of the *De Monarchia* which expressed the political feelings of the Ghibelline party. Matteo Palmieri (1406-1475), a magistrate of Florence and at one time Gonfalonier of Justice, is the sole representative in the early fifteenth century. He wrote several works in Latin, among them a long *De Temporibus* in the encyclopædic style of the mediæval annalists, but his chief work is *La Città di Vita*, written between 1451 and 1465. It is directly modelled on the *Commedia*, and consists of one hundred cantos, divided into three books. It is an elaborate allegory of the doctrine of free-will, expounded in the symbolic passage of the angelic principle of the human soul through the planets and circles of the Ptolemaic Cosmos. Externally the poem is reminiscent of Dante, especially in its topographic minuteness, but it is more directly theological than the work of the master, perhaps because it lacks the poetry of its prototype. It was considered by Palmieri and his time as primarily a theological exercise. Ficino called him "poeta theologicus," and the poet himself by the care which he showed for the suppression of the poem in his own lifetime wisely imagined that the chief interest would lie in its heresies.[1] He is the

The Dante cult.

Palmieri's La Città di Vita.

[1] See the full account of Palmieri's work in Symonds's *Renaissance*, v. 480. No edition of the *Città* is available.

last of the mediævalists in direct touch with Dante. The formal tradition continued in the *terza rima* burlesques of the Renaissance, in the wretched verse of forgotten writers, and in a certain affectation of phrase, but the century had grown dissatisfied with mere metaphors.

Petrarchism.

The direct influence of Petrarch shows a similar depression. The only successors of Coluccio Salutato and the Petrarchisti of the fourteenth century are Bonaccorso da Montemagno and Guisto de' Conti. The former hardly comes into our survey, for though he did not die till 1429, he wrote his *canzone* in the last decade of the fourteenth century. He was an advocate in Florence and in high repute for his elegant but insipid verses.[1] Guisto de' Conti, a Roman lawyer, who afterwards settled at the Court of Rimini, where he died about 1450, was a more pedantic imitator of Petrarch's manner. His remains are a series of sonnets under the title of *La Bella Mano*, in which he wearies the reader, as he might his mistress, in poetical discourse on the beauty of her hand. The series is historically interesting as the last effort of the fifteenth century to preserve the pure manner of the *Rime*, and as an instructive middle stage between the original spirit and the sheer mannerism of the later revival in the time of Bembo.

In general the verse was growing more and more akin to the *novella* in tone. The tales of Franco

[1] According to some, Bonaccorso was a double personality, uncle and nephew.

Sacchetti, Ser Giovanni, and Giovanni Sercambi had not only increased the popularity of the *bourgeois* literature of the *Decameron* type, but had had a considerable effect on the character of the poetry of the closing century. Sacchetti least of all echoes this cynicism in his verse; he revels in the happier details of country life, and reaches at times to true poetry, as in the *canzone* "O vaghe montanine pasturelle." Ser Giovanni's verses throb with the passions of the town. In both poets the effect of realism is modified by a certain quality of preciousness. In Alesso Donati there is a more callous directness, and more of that *esprit narquois* which characterises the popular literature of the first half of the fifteenth century,[1] but whose full influence on Italian literature was not felt till after the overthrow of the classical tyranny. It helped to keep the national spirit alive, but, with one exception towards its close, it did not quicken the vernacular verse to any originality. The period was one of adaptation, which was contented with the transcriptions into verse of Boccaccio and the other *novellieri*.[2] It might be doubted whether there was sufficient talent to continue the prose tale: if there was, it was thwarted by the fact that prose was then the monopoly of Latin. The anonymous *Il Grasso legnaiuolo* is one of the few prose *novelle* which might dispute this opinion;[3] but the fashion was verse.

The influence of the novella.

[1] See the passages in Symonds, iv. 136 and Append. iii.

[2] See Passano's *I Novellieri Italiani in Verso*, 1868.

[3] See chap. xii.

The only poets who need be mentioned are Agostino Veletti, author of the *Ginevra*, and Girolamo Benivieni, better known as a hymn-writer.

A like absence of originality appears in the vernacular religious verse, of which the remains are considerable. The more dignified *Laudi*, such as the 'Maria' of Giovanni Dominici (1356-42), or the best of those by Feo Belcari or Girolamo Benivieni or Lorenzo de' Medici, which belong to the next period, are spiritually and poetically inferior to the wild fervours of their fourteenth century master Jacopone da Todi. Others are mere transmutations of popular songs to religious purposes, parodies in the name of piety,[1] such as was done later in the Scottish *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, and has been done in our day. The only writer who rises above this dead level of sheer imitation is Domenico di Giovanni, better known as Il Burchiello (? 1400-1448), barber in Florence. He wrote a number of *Sonetti caudati*, satirical studies of contemporary life as it passed at the street corners and in the wine-shops of the lowest quarter. His reputation in his own day was great, but now much of his work is, even to Italian scholars, a philological conundrum. For he wrote in a Florentine *gergo* which is forgotten, like the *jobelin* of the Villon poems, and he pointed his wit by allusions which cannot now be understood. That wit was burlesque, and it raised the laugh by its

Religious verse.

Il Burchiello.

[1] Thus Sachetti's line, quoted above, becomes "O vaghe di Gesù, o verginelle."

juxtaposition of opposites. It gave him his contemporary popularity, and it defines his historical position as the inspirer of Bellincioni and the minor Florentine poets *alla burchiellesca* and as the prototype of the more aristocratic and insinuating muse of Francesco Berni.

Second Period: realisation of the national principle.

In the second period, Italian Literature passes through a formative phase. The conditions were more favourable to creative effort than they appeared to be in the Golden Age which succeeded, for not only was there a sense of national repose, and an active patronage of letters and art, but the popular intelligence was now stimulated by the active sympathy of Humanistic culture. Why these forty years of Medicean peace pale in literary power before the unhappy decades which followed the invasion of Charles VIII. of France must be discovered by those critics who explain literature by politics. It may be that the preparation of the earlier period was so thorough and so inevitable in its issue that external influences could not interfere. For the present it will be sufficient to show that it was in the latter portion of the fifteenth century that Italy discerned the principles by which a national literature was to be evolved.

The problem of form.

The problem of the period was one of form. Style was of the essence of Humanism, and it was the only thing by which Humanism could palpably affect the vernacular. The early Renaissance is therefore the history of the refining of the popular realism and the ordering of the growing romanti-

cism by the experience of classical culture. Great individuality is not to be expected in such periods of preparation, and we do not find it at this time. The best writers are but experimenters, who adjust the conditions for creation by a succeeding age. Four poets, Lorenzo de' Medici, Politian, Pulci, and Boiardo, fulfil this function. They transcend their contemporaries in interest not by any proofs of great personal genius, but because they sum up most fully the literary intention of the early Renaissance.

Lorenzo, Il Magnifico.

No Italian expresses the temper of the age more completely than Lorenzo the Magnificent (1448-1492) does in his complex life as statesman, patron, virtuoso, and man of letters.[1] Both in the variety of his talents and in the relative degrees of importance of each he exactly indicates the mood of the Renaissance. Poetry was his least serious care, as it was too with contemporaries who felt less the ambitions of a great public career; but in him more than in these contemporaries it reflects the general character of the man and of the time. He expresses that in his realism, in his popular instincts, and above all in the sheer 'artistry' of all his work. There is a lack of poetic spontaneity in his art. He is concerned with the defence and improvement of the vernacular, fascinated to curiosity by the crowding details and actualities which the new spirit had discovered, and in his most exuberant moods too much the man of the people to attemper his fancy by ideality. It could not well be otherwise in the

[1] Ed. Carducci (Florence, 1859).

circumstances, though Politian, by dint of his genius, conceals more happily the fusion of the popular and classical. His best work is pastoral or idyllic in *motif*, and in several varieties. His *Ambra*, in octaves, the familiar story of a sore-pressed nymph who is saved by Diana by being turned into a rock, is Ovidian, with strong reminiscences of Boccaccio's *Ninfale Fiesolano*. Both in the *Corinto*, an eclogue in *terza rima*, wherein the shepherd Corinto, love-sick for Galatea, makes his moan, and in the two parts of the *Selve d'amore*, which is an echo of the *Silvae* of Statius, he is in search for effect, in the one in the lover's poses, in the other in the allegorical pageantry which turns the poet into a bewildered spectator of his own metaphors. The *Caccia col Falcone*, on the other hand, is a study in Renaissance realism, an open-air picture of a hawking party. But his mastery of detail, his popular sympathies, and his sheer delight in country life, appears in happiest conjunction in the *Nencia da Barberino*. There may be, as Signor D'Ancona has suggested, a delicate touch of parody throughout, but it does not spoil the freshness of the setting in which the bucolic Vallèra woos the bucolic Nencia. It is an artistic triumph in spite of tendencies which were strong in the times and in Lorenzo himself. We have but to compare it with the *Beca da Dicomano* of Luigi Pulci to see how easily the *Nencia* might have become a vulgar caricature. Or we may compare it with Lorenzo's *Simposio*, also called *I Beoni*, a sort of

The idyllic.

His artistic instinct.

apotheosis of tavern-life, where the parody is blatant (a more than Aristophanic burlesque of Dante's sublimities) and the realism of the kind which we find in Skelton's *Elynour Rummyng*. It was not easy to be on terms with the popular spirit and to escape the obscenities which delighted the *bourgeoisie:* and Lorenzo played the pander in the *Canti carnascialeschi* which he wrote for the "Carri" and fêtes in Florence. In these Carnival songs, full of the colour and note of the early Renaissance, Lorenzo has written some of his happiest verses, as in the "Triumph of Bacchus and Ariadne"—

His Carnival songs.

> "Quant' è bella giovinezza,
> Che si fugge tuttavia!
> Chi vuol esser lieto, sia:
> Di doman non c' è certezza," &c.

There is much of the same sensuous appeal to popular sentiment in his *Laudi spirituali*, which some have explained in the vague terms in which we should account for the contrasts in Herrick or Sterne. There is in them, however, no tinge of Savonarola's asceticism, and it is evident that Lorenzo was but turning for the moment from spectacular paganism to spectacular pietism. Neither in these religious poems nor in the carnival pieces does his idea of Love pass beyond the sensuous, and even in his early *Canzoni* and *Sonetti*, where he is confessedly a follower of Petrarchan method, he is only a gallant or formal lover. His

and Lauds.

genius is essentially objective. He had no great ideal and little of that emotion which compels the poet; but he saw the possibilities and uses of the material to hand, and he adjusted and grouped its details in the same spirit in which he controlled the varied politics of the Italian states.

Angelo Poliziano.

Lorenzo's friend, Angelo Poliziano (1454-1494), reached higher literary achievement, yet he was thwarted of his full measure of success by the same conditions which had circumscribed his patron. Both poets are remarkable instances of the imaginative barrenness of Italian art at the dawn of the Renaissance. Hitherto the intellectual and sensuous had been developed at the expense of the emotional; and when the vernacular had become by popular urgency and academic consent the national literary medium, the poets were bankrupt of ideas, except of that grosser kind which amused the citizens and rustics. Lorenzo met the situation as a diplomatist would. To Politian, imbued more deeply than any of his time by classical culture, it was a pure question of art, and his instinct and training laid down the terms on which he should set to work. These were the development of poetical style and metrical form. The poets could not accept unreservedly the formal models of the *trecentismo*, for the conditions were changed, and mere Petrarchism would have appeared even more of a *pastiche* than it did in the early years of the century, or would do later with Bembo and the purists. This Politian probably saw; at least he

The question of style.

saw that the clamant necessity was a formal one, and that there were possibilities beyond mere imitation. Whether his influence in this matter made or marred the fortune of Italian verse is quite another question.

Politian's vernacular verse[1] represents but a fragment of his literary work. In his early years he was a prolific classicist, and he might have remained to posterity as the "Homericus juvenis," as Ficino called him, had not the Cardinal Francesco Gonzaga suggested in 1471 the *Favola di Orfeo*.[2] This he composed in dramatic form, in the space of two days. Five years later he began the *Stanze*, ostensibly in commemoration of a jousting by Lorenzo's brother Giuliano. Fragment though it is,[3] it is a perfect epitome of early Renaissance sentiment. The subject, most trivial in itself, is hardly kept in view by the poet; he digresses at once into a series of studies reminiscent of Claudian and Statius, and mingles classical story—of the Bacchantes, the birth of Aphrodite, the amour of Mars—with sketches of the fair Simonetta, the dead mistress of Giuliano. It is a processional, in which episode succeeds episode like the decorated cars in the Florentine fêtes. It shows the colour and form of the classic past without its soul, the directness and open-air delight of the century without its vulgarity. What it loses in im-

The Stanze.

[1] Ed. Carducci, 1863; also at Milan, 1808 (Dalla Società Tipographica de' Classici Italiani).

[2] See chap. ix. p. 306.

[3] The first part consists of 125 octave stanzas; the second concludes suddenly with the 46th.

aginative vigour, in suggestiveness, and in high seriousness, it makes good in formal art. Politian discovered the true harmony of the octave stanza.

The octave stanza.

Originally a measure of popular verse, it had been adopted by the poets, notably by Boccaccio. From him it received a certain flow in the metrical movement, but it lacked distinction. In the early Renaissance the influence of the new elements tended to the hurt of the rhythm; in Lorenzo the dramatic and *bourgeois* interest disturbs its epical serenity, and in Pulci it loses even more of its quality in the rush and jerks of the new romanticism. Politian holds the balance evenly, or rather he applies the experience of his age towards the fuller development of the innate powers of the national measure, and hands it on perfected to Ariosto.

"Questa con ambe man le tien sospesa
Sopra l' umide trecce una ghirlanda
D' oro e di gemme orientali accesa:
Quella una perla agli orecchi accomanda:
L' altra al bel petto e bianchi omeri intesa
Par che ricchi monili intorno spanda,
De' qua' solean cerchiar le proprie gole
Quando nel ciel guidavan le carole" (*Stanze*, i. 102).

Not only did the style and rhythm of lines such as these, which are taken at random, become the accepted model, but the mental attitude of the *Stanze* remained, by reason of the very glamour of the artistic expression, the dominant characteristic of Italian poetry. Politian, though he escaped pedantry by the soundness of his taste, never rose above the occasional

and trifling, and his successors who copied his art unconsciously followed him in the selection of subject. Both he and they give interesting evidence on the disputed distinction between the art and matter of poetry: he created the epical form but forgot the epic. The same artistic quality is to be found in his minor pieces, *rispetti*, *ballate*, &c., especially in the *Canzonetta zingaresca* ("La Brunettina mia") and the *canzone*, "Monti, valli, antri, e colli." They are dainty, even charming, and all the more so when it is seen how the poet has added an elegance to the popular verse on which they are founded; yet they have more art than soul, the decorum of things exquisite rather than the music of a full heart.

The art and matter of poetry. Cf. Pulci.

Yet another, and quite different, combination of the popular and cultured elements which constitute the early Italian Renaissance is seen in the work of Pulci and Boiardo. Whereas the successors of Boccaccio had dignified the villa-gossip and tavern-anecdote, and Lorenzo, and especially Politian, had welded the village idyll with the graceful traditions of the classics, Pulci and Boiardo turned to the rough romantic material of the *improvisatori* as a groundwork on which to build a new national epic. Pulci's work—the creation of the romantic epic—is the most important and original contribution to Italian literature in the fifteenth century. It is the least classical product of a classical age. The romantic character of Italian literature, such as we know it in the great poets from Pulci to Tasso, was acquired; there was no

The romantic idea.

"matter" of Italy as there was of France or England.[1] Till almost the dawn of the fifteenth century, poems of the *novella* and *rispetto* types completely expressed the popular mind; when the interest ranged further afield the poets had to go to foreign sources for their romantic heroes and adventures. The political and social conditions in mediæval Tuscany did not foster the chivalric instinct, and the introduction of a story such as that of the French Roland was due much more to the mere fascination of a world-wide masterpiece than to any inherent necessity. It is just possible that the sudden interest in romantic episode, which coincided in time with the absolute dominion of Latin scholarship, was but a phase of popular reaction against that tyranny. Thus naturalised, it attracted later the poets who were in search of popular subjects, and it became, in the most complete sense, the medium of national sentiment, not only by reason of those larger qualities which commended it to Ariosto and Tasso, but through that spirit of cynical burlesque which dominates the Renaissance, and indeed all Italian literature. Orlando is not a mere Italianate Roland.

[1] From the evidence of certain Arthurian names discovered by Signor Pio Rajna in Italian documents of the early twelfth century, it has been assumed that the Italians of the eleventh century were familiar with the romantic material of the Round Table cycle. The data are however of the scantiest; and the positive fact remains that the *literary* romanticism of later centuries was a discovery—a fresh discovery, we may perhaps say—of a foreign subject and *motif*, as represented in certain Arthurianised versions of the Charlemagne stories. It might be hard to establish any direct *Italian* connection between the eleventh century tradition (had we any literary evidence of it) and the later renascence in the predecessors of Ariosto.

Luigi Pulci.

Luigi Pulci (1432-1484) was on intimate terms with the house of Medici and was influenced, though least on the classical side, by the literary atmosphere of their Court. He seems to have had a considerable share in the curious book of adventures, *Ciriffo Calvaneo*, generally ascribed to his brother Luca (1431-1470),[1] and also in the continuation of Luca's *Giostra*, written in honour of Lorenzo. He is the author, too, of the *Beca da Dicomano*, in imitation of Lorenzo's *Nencia*,[2] of a *Confessione* in *terza rima*, of a number of *strambotti* and smaller pieces, and of a series of sonnets attacking and replying to his friend Matteo Franco in Florentine Billingsgate which would have rejoiced the Scottish poets in their bouts of 'flyting.' His reputation rests, however, on the *Morgante Maggiore*.[3] It has commanded attention for two reasons: first, by its historical position in the evolution of the romantic epic, and, secondly, as a problem in interpretation. Criticism has now established the fact that in construction the poem falls into two divisions: the one (stanzas i.-xxiii.), the *Morgante* proper, being, as Signor Rajna has conclusively shown, but a rehandling and welding together of a fourteenth-century popular version and the composite verse-romance called *La Spagna*; the other (stanzas xxiv.-xxviii.) showing marked originality in the treatment of the story of

The Morgante Maggiore.

[1] Another brother, Bernardo (1438-1488), left some minor elegiac and dramatic poems, chiefly of a religious character.

[2] *Ante*, p. 130.

[3] So called because the portion dealing with the story of the giant Morgante (stanzas i.-xx.) had appeared under the shorter title.

Roncesvalles. The genuine romantic flavour of the whole poem—its dependence on incident rather than on character, its jostle of kings, giants, champions, and devils—hides the discrepancies in the construction; and the epical unity of the whole is strengthened by the persistent villainy of the black-hearted Gano or Ganellon. So far, except perhaps in the concluding stanzas, the poem is intrinsically *popular* in subject and in tone, untouched by the culture which we find most fully expressed in the *Stanze*. But there is transposed throughout the whole a peculiar quality which is at once original and perplexing, a quality which expresses itself in sarcasm in the midst of dignified description, in scholastic digressions amid the rush of adventure, in sheer mockery in the holy places of the chivalry which it honours—in general, in a provoking inconsequence in artistic effect and intellectual *motif*. This characteristic of Pulci's verse, which made it the prototype of the Italian burlesque as well as of the Italian romantic epic, may be traced to two sources. In the popular versions of the Roland story from which he borrowed, there was already a strong element of the comic and grotesque; for the Tuscans had never accepted the tale in the spirit of the northern trouvères, but had found in the medley of giants and knights a tempting opportunity for buffoonery and practical joking. Pulci could not, or would not, eliminate this comic strain in his rifacimento of the current romances: his infidel monster Margutte is a merry fellow who upsets the gravity of knight and fiend alike, and ends his frolic

Burlesque.

by laughing till he bursts. But this is only part of the explanation of Pulci's intellectual devilry. Its subtler and more whimsical qualities and its restlessness come from the other side of Renaissance life. The poem, it must be remembered, grew piece by piece, as occasion suggested a new topic to the poet during those Attic nights in the palace with Ficino, Politian, Michelangelo, and their friends. It is thus a kind of symposium-record, a reflection of the mixed and changing tastes and sentiments of Italian culture; not classical in the strict sense, but humanistic even to the faults. The popular and cultured society in Renaissance Italy found common ground in an intellectual flippancy and love of burlesque, just as in contemporary France the château and tavern had found a temporary *rapprochement* in a ribald verse and prose. The Italian mood is, however, more complex and uncertain, mixing scepticism with pietism, enthusiasm with cynicism, the blatant with the delicate. Pulci exactly expresses this phase, both by personal training and by the choice of his subject, avoiding alike the academic extreme of his friends of the *Via Larga* and the vulgar delight of the burghers. This must be the explanation of his style, which long remained a puzzle to modern readers. Neither is he a mere debauchee of burlesque who turns serious things to ridicule, nor is he a mere eccentric; for his "half-serious rhyme"[1] was called forth by the devout lady Lucrezia Tornabuoni, and was written with a serious purpose, and, on the other hand, it is a faithful expression of the prevailing

[1] Byron, *Don Juan*, iv. 6.

tone of society, and not of an idiosyncrasy. He marks the point of union between the two forces which were agitating Italian literature. Yet though he reflects the chaotic condition of the literary taste of the time, his art is not lacking in individuality. For to the historical interest of having revived the romantic story we must add the critical interest attaching to the fact that he gave importance to the subject in contrast to the form, which had been hitherto the chief concern, and that in his treatment of the villainies of Gano he justified to his contemporaries and successors the continuity of epical *motif*. The one implies the other, to a certain extent; but the existence of either is remarkable amid the prevailing fashion of literary patchwork.

The art and matter of poetry again. Cf. Politian.

A perhaps greater conception of this epical unity, though with less elegance of form, characterises the *Orlando Innamorato* of Pulci's contemporary, Matteo Maria Boiardo (1434-1494). Boiardo, so long forgotten, has now had his due as the forerunner of the *Orlando Furioso* of Ariosto and of the rifacimentos of Berni and Domenichi. The extent to which he defined the romantic epic of the Golden Age is beyond the intention of the present volume; but the retrospective interest of his work in relation to the revived mediævalism and to classicism and its contrasts with the work of his fellow-romanticist must be briefly discussed.

Matteo Maria Boiardo.

Though Pulci appears to modern readers the more original, Boiardo, less humorous and exceedingly prolix, is more of the literary creator. Pulci's semi-seriousness was after all but an intelligent expression of a

general mood, and his work, with two notable exceptions, was but a transcription of the episode and phrase of popular story. Boiardo, on the other hand, borrowed less directly and narrowly, and had a truer appreciation of both the mediæval and classical spirit. His position as Count of Scandiano and his life at the court of Ferrara and in the governorship of Reggio attracted him to the older chivalry. It is obvious that not only his liking but his feeling for the courtly ideals of the past are more genuine than with Pulci, and less of an affectation than with Ariosto. For this reason some have described his historical place by the metaphor of the setting sun. It is certainly less appropriate than in the case of Stephen Hawes, for though it was succeeded by work which, even in Ariosto, was a *pastiche*, it manifestly determined the main character of that work. This is the more clear when we examine the data for and against such a comparison. Boiardo has his class-predilection for the "matter" of Arthur, rather than of Charlemagne; the revived feudalism of the Italian Courts was, as Mr Symonds has pointed out,[1] in closer touch with the chivalric tradition of the Round Table than with the more actual story of the Paladins of France, especially as that story had been appropriated by the *bourgeoisie* and refurbished to their taste. Hence it is that though Boiardo has drawn from both cycles, he has those qualities of the older feudalism which are wanting in Pulci. These may be described briefly as a certain feeling for the mediæval notion of courtesy; a simple enthusiasm for knightly

Chivalric tradition.

[1] *Renaissance in Italy*, iv. ch. i.

adventure, with an admiration of prowess and daring; an appreciation of the mysterious and weird, both in episode and in poetic setting; and, above all, the infusion of the element of love. This last, which he emphasises in the title of his poem, and the undoubted dignity and higher resolve of the whole work have been the chief reasons why some have considered Boiardo as the evening glow of the old courtly poetry in Italy. But, on the other hand, it is obvious that there is something of an effort in his mediævalism, and that behind all lies the spirit of the Renaissance, expressed both in the general terms of the popular movement of the century and in the more specific terms of the classical revival. He finds allegory inadequate, and very rarely attempts it; his portraits of women are as far away from the knightly ideal as are the cynical sketches of Jean de Meun; and the wooing of his champions is often too full-blooded for even old-world courtesy. The scheme of characters is too complicated, and the characters themselves too restless; and in Arthur's Camelot there never was such a 'flyting' as was between the Italian heroes in their noisy quarrel, nor, in the interval of combat, such high discourse on the value of learning to the true knight.[1]

Its modifications.

> "Rispose Orlando: Io tiro teco a un segno,
> Che l' armi son de l' uomo il primo onore;
> Ma non già che il saper faccia men degno,
> Anzi lo adorna com' un prato il fiore;

[1] In interesting contrast with the "Curious Discourse" of Don Quixote on Arms and Letters (i. xxxviii.)

Ed è simile a un bove, a un sasso, a un legno
Chi non pensa a l' eterno creatore;
Nè ben si può pensar, senza dottrina,
La somma maestade alta e divina."

The poem is tinged with Humanism. Boiardo had written, besides Latin eclogues and epigrams, a number of vernacular pieces, for the most part translations or transcriptions from the classics.[1] From this experience he gained little on the formal side of his art, as Politian did. His style cannot free itself from the crudities of the dialect of Reggio, on which Dante had set his curse; his vernacular verse shows neither the rhythm nor the rhetorical fancy of his favourite Latin authors. On the spiritual side, however, the purport is patent, in the way in which he sublimates his idea of courtly chivalry in the figures of classical fancy.

Boiardo's romantic epic.

Though his nymphs are not Greek-born, and his knights not quite mediæval, the general effect is successful, and the addition of the classical quality to the Arthurian and Rolandesque supplies an artistic solidity and dignity. Boiardo's claim in the history of Italian æsthetic is that in the adjustment of these elements he found a truer perspective of his subject, by subordinating each and all of the episodes to a general plan, and by giving to the whole conception, as well as to each and all of the characters, a feeling of general life and movement. The poem exactly suited the temper of his time; it was the complex idea which the Golden

[1] He also wrote the *Amorum Liber*, a collection of Italian sonnets, madrigals, canzoni, &c. (ed. Panizzi, London, 1835).

Age demanded and made so thoroughly its own that later generations forgot the creator in the glamour of the triumphs of Ariosto and Tasso.

Minor poets.

The remaining Italian poets are of minor interest individually, but they are worthy of record as indexes of the different moods of the closing century. The epical style is continued by Francesco Bello of Ferrara, called "Il Cieco," in his *Mambriano*,[1] a long poem of the Roland type. It would be more correct to say that it deals with the material of the romantic epic, for it entirely lacks the artistic unity which is suggested in Pulci and Boiardo. It is rather a series of chivalric episodes about Renaldo, Mambriano, Astolfo, and others, joined together in as slight poetic sequence as the hundred tales of the *Decameron*. Matteo Franco survives in Italian literature as Walter Kennedy does in Scottish, for he engaged Pulci in a sonnet-fight in which the poets satirised and burlesqued each other in extravagant terms.[2] It might be difficult to adjudicate between Italian and Scottish scurrility as uttered by Franco and Pulci on the one hand, and Kennedy and Dunbar on the other: the only interesting point of contrast is that the Italians ultimately lost their tempers and forgot the noble art of libel in an unseemly brawl. A milder mood of burlesque prevails in the *Sonetti faceti*[3] of Antonio Cammelli of Pistoia (1440-1502), who may be

[1] Printed posthumously in 1509.

[2] *Sonetti di Matteo Franco e Luigi Pulci.* 1759.

[3] Ed. Renier, Turin, 1888.

described as a connecting link between the older popular caricature of Il Burchiello and the later and more refined *bizarrerie* of Berni. In contrast with these writers stands Pandolfo Collenuccio (1444-1504), a translator of the classics, whose claim to be an original poet rests on his *Canzone alle morte*,[1] written in 1488 during imprisonment, in which a certain vigour compensates for a rough, formless manner. There is something of the Renaissance pessimism in his address to

"Cara, opportuna, e desiata Morte";

but it is the cry of a pagan down in his luck, not of a visionary vexed by the grizzly spectre. Though the fourteenth century had its *Danse Macabre*,[2] the horrors of the Black Death had never been accepted as a literary subject even in the most active period of popular realism. Italian art, like the idle gossips of Boccaccio's masterpiece, withdrew to a pleasance where it was free from the contamination of the charnel-house. And when the scourge had passed, society, undismayed by the experience which continued to trouble the Northern conscience, surrendered itself, socially and artistically, to an orgie of sense. Not till the unhappy years of the early sixteenth century, in the thick of national misfortune, was the popular fancy disturbed by the nightmare of the mediæval Death; and even in the most extravagant form, as in the Triumph which passed through the streets of Florence in 1512—a procession

The Italian Death.

[1] D'Ancona e Bacci, *Manuale*, ii. 174.

[2] By Rabbi Santo.

gruesome with black cloth, skeletons, and tombs—there is a suspicion of mere effect, of the artistic expression of a half-realised penitence. To some extent this was one of the temporary results of the propaganda of Girolamo Savonarola, who represents the extreme expression of reaction against not only the licence of Italian art, but Art itself. He was a hater of learning as a sin of the flesh, and a despiser of the Muses as allies of the devil; yet he has left a series of *Canzoni* (1472-75), and of *Laudi spirituali* (1484-96). None are of any merit, and the latter, a carefully planned counterblast to the pagan *Canti carnascialeschi*, have only the interest of his personality and mission. The wicked Lorenzo could, and did, beat him in religious rhyme.

Girolamo Savonarola.

One other writer, Jacopo Sannazaro (1458-1530), may be mentioned here, though with less propriety than in the chapter on prose, and perhaps with even less propriety than in the succeeding volume, for his *Arcadia*[1] yields important evidence, in the first place, as to the development of prose style, in the matter both of the infusion of classicism into the vernacular and of the commingling of the poetic and prose styles, and, in the second place, with respect to subject, in so far as it defined the idyllic idea. His masterpiece might be more conveniently discussed with the later examples to

Jacopo Sannazaro.

[1] Ed. Michele Scherillo, Turin, 1888. The Appendix contains a set of 'eclogues,' written at the close of the century, under the influence of the *Arcadia*, by certain 'gentiluomini napoletani,' including Pietro Jacopo de Jennaro.

which it had served as model; yet a few words may be necessary here, because this very idyllic character was the direct result of conditions which we have noted throughout the century, and because, independently of the metrical portions of the *Arcadia*, he had written verses. These were chiefly in Latin, and were most successful in the *Eclogae piscatoriae* (an Arcady of Nereids and cockle-shells), but he has left a series of *Rime*, dedicated to Cassandra Marchese, in which the influence of Petrarch is strong, and also a few minor pieces in over-elaborated rhyme and metre. A like formal fault mars the verse passages of the *Arcadia*, where the measures harmonise poorly with the theme; just as, in the opinion of the best Italian critics, the style is disturbed by dialectal solecisms and academic pedantries. Yet the historical interest of Sannazaro, both as prose-writer and poet, remains secure, for he disclosed to the New Italy the secret of its desire, of which there had been many a fitful hint since the time of Boccaccio. In the first stages of reaction against mediæval convention, the return to nature (if we may antedate the catchword) was an ill-considered jumble of ideas, with little or no guiding principle beyond what comes from mere curiosity. Primarily it was *bourgeois* and flippant, exploring with rough laughter the corners which classical tradition and courtly custom had passed by; but it had also shown, in its idyllic fancy, a longing for the gentler freedom of nature in its simpler aspects, in the rustic life of the hills and vineyards beyond the city-bounds. This desire persists

The discoverer of Arcady.

throughout the whole period, and when, in the second stage of the transition, Italy begins to grow weary of her intellectual libertinage and to turn for relief to the romantic past, or to a new asceticism, or to pure scholarship, the happy life of shepherd-land, with its gentler emotions, comes as the revelation of an ideal to an aimless art. Arcadia is the Renaissance counterpart to the mediæval Garden of the Rose, and satisfies the poetic requirements of its time as amply as the older allegory had satisfied the past. The contrast presented by the newer pastoral idea is noteworthy. There is a stronger feeling for Nature; the landscape scale is larger—a region of hill and valley, not a Temple-garden with its wicket-gate to the outer world; the life therein is simpler and freer.

His poetic purpose and influence.

Externally, in colour and episode, it is classical, for scholarship had made the Sicilian and Roman models familiar; but its *motif* is the universal reaction against artificiality, and it would have chosen the bucolic manner, even if the nature-loving Italian had remained in ignorance of Theocritus. It became in due course hardened by convention, just as had happened in the older allegory; but in its earlier form it realised poetically the ideal longings of the sixteenth century, of Tasso, Sidney, Cervantes, and Guarini, — all sojourners in the Arcady which Sannazaro discovered for Italian and European art.

CHAPTER V.

POETRY IN SPAIN AND PORTUGAL, AND IN GERMANY.

THE COURTLY TONE OF SPANISH VERSE—ALLEGORICAL DECLINE—THE 'CANCIONEROS'—THEIR REPRESENTATIVE CHARACTER—A CLASS PRODUCT—THE CONCEPTION OF THE POETIC FUNCTION AND ART——FOREIGN INFLUENCES—ENRIQUE DE VILLENA—THE MARQUESS OF SANTILLANA—HIS BORROWED AND NATIVE QUALITIES—JUAN DE MENA—THE 'LABERINTO'—THE "ARTE MAYOR"—FERNÁN PÉREZ DE GUZMÁN—THE MANRIQUES—JORGE MANRIQUE—SIGNIFICANCE OF THE LAMENT—A 'POPULAR' STRAIN—ITS LIMITATIONS—THE DANCE OF DEATH—TRIUMPH OF THE ITALIAN MANNER—PORTUGUESE POETRY—THE SPANISH AND GERMAN MOODS CONTRASTED—GENERAL CHARACTER OF GERMAN POETRY—THE RELATION OF THE MINNESONG TO THE MEISTERSONG—THE MAIN VARIETIES OF GERMAN VERSE—THE DYING POETRY OF CHIVALRY—THE BURGHER VERSE—THE EARLIER MEISTERSONG—THE DIDACTIC VERSE—VARIOUS VERSE-MAKERS—BRANT'S 'NARRENSCHIFF'—ITS HISTORICAL BEARINGS AND INFLUENCE—BARCLAY'S TRANSLATION—THE DESTINY OF GERMAN POETRY

SPANISH poetry of the fifteenth century lacks the interest of individuality, unless it be that its belated persistence in methods which were outworn elsewhere is proof of an idiosyncrasy. It was self-centred and satisfied with its conventions, so satisfied that there was no opportunity for a Villon or Skelton to shake

poetic tradition, if indeed such forces of disturbance could have been possible. Yet retrospective and commonplace as this verse literature is, it far outreaches all its contemporaries in sheer activity, a fact the more remarkable when we consider that the prose chronicle and romance and other matters simultaneously engaged the literary energies of the nation. There is less poetry, but there are more poets and more poems, as the long list of *Cancioneros* bears witness.

The 'courtly' tone of Spanish verse.

The verse is, almost without exception, of the 'courtly' type. It could not well be otherwise in a society in which the feudal instinct was so strong. Each of the many castles of a powerful nobility was a minor court, in which the sentiment of chivalry was fostered. Spanish culture owed much to Provence; it had already adopted the canons of the Gay Science; and the severe struggle with the Moors gave a national emphasis to a manner which must have suffered earlier change, as elsewhere on the Continent. The effect of these conditions is seen most clearly in the religious verse. Patriotism and piety came to be much the same thing to the Spaniard in his contest with his Moslem foes; he was not disturbed, as the Italian was, by the disillusionment of a militant church or an intellectual paganism; or amused, as the Frenchman was, at the spiritual confusion of the Middle Ages. There is small opportunity as yet for the *bourgeois* and cynical; and when the time did come for Cervantes to ridicule the knight-

errantry of the decline he did it as a Spanish gentleman should. The admixture of satire in the verse of this period, dealing especially with the failings of the fair sex, marks the extreme limit of literary impropriety, and this we have seen was characteristic of all the later courtly poetry throughout Europe, if not of the human race, since Aristophanes—and Adam. But in Spain this purpose was neither carried so far, nor made the excuse for a searching criticism of the older ideals and ceremonies. It may rather be matter for astonishment that, in a land so full of poets so desperately in love with so many fair dames, the Duessas escaped so much more easily than the faithless Moors.

Allegorical decline.

On the other hand, it is obvious that though Spanish verse is essentially courtly, and is comparatively free from the disintegrating influences which were at work throughout the century, it has lost the sustained power of the older allegory. The poems are short, and deal in most cases with matters of passing interest. Moreover, there is a remarkable consciousness, or, we might say, note of professionalism, in all the literary work and appreciation during this period. This was, to some extent, the continuation of Provençal tradition, as shown in the Catalan verse, and later in the Castilian—internally by a studious attention to the formal details of verse-making, externally in the revived Consistory of the Gay Science at Barcelona (1413) or in the Contest of Valencia (1474). Further evidence is afforded by the Arts of Poetry which followed in the wake of Enrique de Villena's

Arte de trovar, and in the remarkable series of *Cancioneros* from Baena's to the edition of Hernán del Castillo.

The Cancioneros.

The existence of these collections is testimony of a sort of unity in Spanish letters and of a general interest in contemporary verse such as we do not find in any other country at this time. They are, as it were, the manuals of the fifteenth century, from which we can form a fairly complete idea of the literary condition of the Peninsula. More than a dozen are now known to belong to this century and the first decade of the sixteenth, and it is highly probable that further discoveries of MSS. will be made in the great Continental collections. First in order comes the collection of Juan Alfonso de Baena, a Jewish convert who held an official position at the Court of Juan II. It was made about 1450, and it includes specimens of nearly sixty poets.[1] Another of the same date, or perhaps 1460, contains pieces by thirty-one followers of the Gay Science after its Catalan revival at the Consistory of 1413.[2] The *Cancionero de* [Lope de] *Stúñiga*, which represents about forty writers, is chiefly interesting because it contains the work of the Neapolitan Spaniards who had followed the fortunes of Alfonso V.[3] There is also the anthology of Fernán Martínez de Burgos (1464),

[1] Ed. Marqués de Pidal (1851); reprinted by Brockhaus (Leipzig, 1860).

[2] See Ticknor's *Spanish Literature*, i. 301; Ochoa, *Catálogo de Manuscritos Españoles en la Bibl. Real de Paris*, Paris, 1844.

[3] Ed. Marqués de la Fuensanta del Valle & José Sancho Rayón (1872).

and thereafter quite half-a-dozen, as enumerated by Ochoa. The introduction of printing in 1474 did not at first stimulate the productions of these collections, though the first printed book, the *Trobes en lahors de la Verge María*, was an ingathering of the pious verses of over forty authors, mostly Catalan; and a Cancionero of nine contributors appeared at Saragossa in 1492. But in 1511 Hernán del Castillo published his *Cancionero General*,[1] the most important of the whole series, and practically the last, for the numerous anthologies of the sixteenth century down to the Antwerp edition of 1573 were based upon it, and were but eked out as new material came to hand. In its first form it is more elaborate than its predecessors, for it contains examples of about one hundred poets, collected, it is said, during a period of about twenty years; but it merely emphasises, rather than adds to, our information of the æsthetic movement of the century. The general impression derived from each and all is the same, and this is in itself convincing proof of their representative character. In the first place, the *personnel* is worthy of notice; each book is a veritable collection "of royal and noble authors," varying in chivalric degree from well-born Dons to Marquises and Viscounts, like Santillana, Astorga, and Altamira, and to King Juan himself. Poetry was thus not only courtly in tone, but literally a courtly exercise and a class-amusement. Baena clearly acknowledges this in the preface to his

Their representative character.

A class product.

[1] Ed. Sociedad de Bibliófilos Españoles (1882).

collection, where he declares that the poet, though relying on God's grace, must have played the courtier and mixed with great folk, and must be, among other things, of good family. Pedro de Urrea, early in the next century, had a knightly horror of being disgraced by the printing-press before men of low degree. Under these conditions Spanish verse inevitably suffers from the vice of its quality; the courtly muse, always hankering after formality, becomes morbidly artificial and narrow. An analysis, on the lines laid down by Ticknor,[1] of the varieties included in the *Cancionero General* shows this in a striking way. There is little piety and much ribaldry in the religious hymns. The *Trivenciones*, eleven score in number, are mere conceits, verse descriptions of the heraldic devices and emblems chosen by the knights in tournaments and other ceremonies. Of like type are the "Motes con sus glosas," mottos or verse sentiments with elaborate glosses, whose sheer verbosity quite justified the opinion of Don Quixote's "discerning friend."[2] The *Preguntas* or Queries have the merit of schoolgirls' conundrums. In the other portions of more poetic pretension there is little or no spontaneity. The Ballads, thirty-seven in all, are introduced not so much for their own sake as for the glosses which they suggest; and the songs, both *Canciones* and the more specific *Villancicos*, and the secular verse gen-

[1] I. 396-403.

[2] II. xviii. These special forms seem to belong to the end of the century or to the beginning of the sixteenth. See Ormsby's *Don Quixote*, iii. 202 n.

erally, are, with rare exceptions, artificial and uninspired. Baena's characterisation of the poet as a cunning scanner, a man of ingenious faculty, and a lover, real or assumed, is amply confirmed. Imagination and passion are under intellectual restraint, and they lead the writer no further than mere conceits. The artistic proportion and freshness of the older allegory is destroyed by the worthless digressions of a scholastic metaphysic, and the main theme, we might say the *raison d'être* of the whole art, Love, has the interest of an affectation. Everything is more or less touched by the palsy of the *versos glosados*. A subordinate strain of satire and burlesque, which finally asserted itself in the *Cancionero de burlas provocantes á risa* (1519),[1] shows more vitality, but it runs to an opposite extreme of obscenity. It but illustrates the familiar contrast between the knight visored and plumed and the knight untrussed. Yet even in this *genre* these ribalds must yield to the Archpriest Juan Ruis or the tailor Montoro.

The conception of the poetic function and art.

The formalism and frigidity of Spanish poetry was largely due to the fact that Castilian literature, no longer inspired by the old heroic ideals, was submitting to a variety of foreign influences, and had not till the second half of the century made final selection of its models. The ascendancy of the Provençal style threatened for a time to transform completely the native manner. The Galician influence died out in the earlier poets before

Foreign influences.

[1] Ed. Luis de Usoz y Río. London, 1841.

the stronger Catalan or Provençal, and the courtly verse in its turn gradually yielded to the stronger attractions of the Italian and of Italian classicism. The cross-currents are visible in the *Cancioneros.* In Baena we see the last flicker of the Galician school in the love-tossed Rodríguez del Padron and the worldly Alfonso Álvarez de Villasandino; and in several the promise of the Italian manner, especially in Francisco Imperial, of Italian blood, and a lover of Dante. The latter becomes more and more obvious as we proceed—the result partly of the closer political connection, as symbolised in the work of the coterie of the Neapolitan Spaniards, but more truly of the general attention to Dante and the early Italian masters which distinguishes the reign of Juan II. The conflicts and erratic blendings of these different influences is too intricate a subject for present treatment; it is sufficient to state the broad facts, and to find what further illustration we may in some concluding notes on the few poets who stand out, though in low relief, from the dead level of their age.

Enrique de Villena.

Enrique de Villena, or de Aragón (1384-1434), for a time Master of the Order of Calatrava, has small claim to his reputation as a poet on the strength of the few *coplas* written for certain festivities at Saragossa, the only verses which are now extant. His fame rests more justly on his many-sided interest in literary work. He was of that encyclopædic type, common throughout Europe at this time, which was dully ambitious to write what Quevedo later

styles the "libro de todas las cosas y otras muchas mas." His variety is entertaining: an Art of Poetry (*Arte de trovar*), an allegorical piece on the Labours of Hercules (*Trabajos de Hércules*), translations of the *Aeneid* and the *Divina Commedia*,[1] an Art of Carving (*Arte cisoria*), being a prose handbook of the science of the royal sideboard, a treatise on the Evil Eye, and what not. His fame survived for several centuries in Spanish literature, though in his own day the suspicious mob treated him as a sort of Michael Scot. Now the main interest of his literary life is his sympathetic attitude to the poetic revival of the Consistory of Barcelona and his recognition of the Italian and classical models. Like King Juan II., himself a dilettante, and in some respects like James IV., King of Scots, he was a begetter of poets rather than a serious adventurer among them.

The Marquess of Santillana.

Villena's friend, Íñigo López de Mendoza, Marquess of Santillana (1398-1458), is honoured with a place in nearly all the Cancioneros.[2] The best of his life was spent in soldiering and statecraft, and it was not till his closing years, after the death of his enemy the Constable Álvaro de Luna, that he seriously devoted himself to the Muses, and justified the argument of Boiardo's Orlando that culture becomes the good knight. In a few inspired moments he gave Spanish literature some of her most

[1] The translation of Dante is not extant.

[2] He is intentionally omitted from Baena's.

exquisite gems, especially the perfect *serranilla* to the country maid of La Finojosa—

"En un verde prado
De rosas é flores
Guardando ganado
Con otros pastores,
La vi tan fermosa
Que apenas creyera
Que fuesse vaquera
De la Finojosa." . . .

Yet it may be a question whether the average quality of his verse is higher than that of his contemporaries. His work has the additional interest of clearly reflecting the different foreign influences which were then moulding the Castilian into its final literary form. He is Provençal and Italianate as well as Spanish; and to his Spanish he adds a flavour of Galician.[1] He is happiest in his Provençal mood, and he escapes the excessive formalism which distinguishes other Spanish imitators of the Troubadours. To modern ears he has the advantage of his models, because he has even less of the artificiality which is always present even in the best of the older courtly poetry. His success is the more remarkable, for his interest in Provençal was chiefly critical,[2] as was Villena's.[3] From the Italians he took the sonnet

[1] Thus in his *serranillas* there is a Galician strain, through the *cánticas de serrana* of the Archpriest of Hita, his predecessor by about a century. Ticknor points out that there are lines in Galician in his poem on the love-story of Macías (i. 341).

[2] He even experiments in Arab measures.

[3] See the preface to the *Centilóquio*. Villena's *Art of Poetry* was addressed to Santillana.

of the Petrarcan type, which had not as yet been practised in Castile; and there are obvious echoes of Dante in his allegorical poem in honour of his contemporary the troubadour Jordi, in the octaves of his poem on Villena, and in his poetical dialogue the *Comedieta de Ponza*. On this side he is a mere imitator. The *Sonnets* especially, "fechos al itálico modo," are the conscientious work of the intelligent foreigner. The rest of his verse may be called, in poor compliment, 'plain Spanish.' We have a tedious history of the Spanish world from Adam to Juan II.; outspoken verses on his dead rival Álvaro de Luna (*Doctrinal de Privados*); two dialogues, the foresaid *Comedieta* which deals with the Spanish misfortune at Ponza in 1435, and the *Diálogo de Bias contra Fortuna;* a collection of rhymed proverbs; and some religious verse,—an *olla* of history, allegory, and Tusser-like philosophy, welcome to his generation, which had little stomach for the kickshaws of *La Finojosa*.

His borrowed and native qualities.

The court-poet and historiographer Juan de Mena (1411-56) more completely represents the literary mood of his time. His official position, but above all his 'conceited' style, which shows him as a maker of quotable phrases, commended him to the editors of the *Cancioneros*, such as Baena and Stúñiga. Unlike Santillana, he passed a long apprenticeship in letters and was wholly absorbed from first to last in that pursuit, turning out occasional verses, Laureate lays, as well as more ambitious poems and prose, with the painful ease of the gentleman-

Juan de Mena.

hack. His longest poems are one on the Seven Deadly Sins, dully didactic and unbroken by even a gleam of picturesque fancy as in Dunbar, an allegory called the *Coronación* or a humdrum journey to Parnassus for the crowning of Santillana, and another called the *Laberinto* or *Las Trescientas*.[1] The last is typical of Mena and of his century—poor in conception, tedious and confused, and absolutely devoid of any sense of finality or proportion. It was written piecemeal, and might have been extended to thrice 'three hundred' stanzas without any harm to its labyrinthine idea. The story goes that sixty-five were added by desire of Juan II., so that his Majesty might have a fresh stanza for each day in the year.

The Laberinto.

The *Laberinto* is one of the best fifteenth-century examples of the 'jigging' metre of the *arte mayor*, such as had been used before by the Archpriest of Hita, and by Pero López de Ayala, who died in 1407. The normal line consists of twelve syllables with a cæsura in the middle and an accent on the second and fifth syllables of each half. It is in a sense a double *redondilla menor*, with this difference, that the first accent is confined to the second syllable and may not range over the first four as it does in the shorter measure. In practice, however, the *arte mayor* shows a clipping away of the short syllables at the beginning and end of each half, in a manner which is unexpected in Romance verse, and difficult to trace to its reputed original, the French decasyllabic. Professor Ker reminds us that the tedious

The arte mayor.

[1] I.e., *Las Trescientas* [*Coplas*].

Laberinto was actually sung, and explains the eccentricity of accent as a relic of an old popular dance rhythm, which happens to be identical with the 'tumbling verse' of fourteenth and fifteenth century English poetry.[1] Otherwise Mena is strongly influenced by the Italian poetry. The scenery on the way to Parnassus and the allegorical pictures in the *Laberinto* are in many places mere transcripts from Dante. But here, as in his prose, he shows an appetite much beyond his powers of assimilation, and he remains the first striking proof of Spain's 'deadly sin' of literary gluttony when she had discovered the flesh-pots of Italy.

Spanish courtly poetry in the fifteenth century was really the private affair of Santillana and his family and friends. Villena was a kinsman, Juan de Mena his protégé; Fernán Pérez de Guzmán and Gómez Manrique were his nephews. Gómez's brother Rodrigo was a poet too, and Rodrigo's son Jorge may well dispute the honours given to the author of *La Finojosa.*

Fernán Pérez de Guzmán (1378-1460) is important

[1] See Professor Ker's interesting paper on English and Spanish verse, read before the Philological Society of London, 2nd December 1898. His thesis is that the Tusserian rhythm is not wholly (or indeed at all) derived from the old alliterative verse; that its Spanish analogue, the *arte mayor*, is not explained by the French line or the later Italian; and that both are survivals of popular dance rhythms. But from what is the English 'popular' rhythm derived, if not from the alliterative? And does the Spanish reach back before the times of the Visigoths and Saracens? Professor Ker would seem to threaten us with the ingenious Celt, though he does not commit himself to an avowal.

as a prose-writer, though he has left considerable remains in verse, mostly commonplace studies in national biography and proverbial philosophy, or tedious allegories on things good and evil. The three Manriques deserve more attention. Like Santillana they had all seen service in the field. Rodrigo, Count of Paredes (1416-1476), is of least account (he is represented by a short lyric in the *Cancionero General*); but his brother Gómez, Señor de Villazopeque (1412-91), either had more poetic leisure or has had better luck with posterity. We shall return to him in the chapter on the drama. In his other verse, which is chiefly allegorical, he has nearly all Mena's faults of preciousness and more than Santillana's ill-considered fondness for Italian models, occasionally relieved, as in portions of his elegies, by directness and simplicity of genuine feeling. His nephew Jorge (1440-1478), Señor de Belmontejo, as a writer of fashionable conceits is neither better nor worse than his neighbours, but in the lament for his father (*Coplas de Jorge Manrique por la muerte de su padre*) he reaches to the heights of artistic and spiritual perfection. This literary triumph is the analogue of his great kinsman's masterpiece; each stands apart from the well-intentioned commonplaces of their other literary work — the true flower, as it were, of the chivalric sentiment. It is foolish to compare them, though modern taste may probably prefer the deeper chords in the more sustained effort of the younger poet; they express the two dominant

Fernán Pérez de Guzmán.

The Manriques.

Jorge Manrique.

moods of ideal knighthood; each is exquisite in its own kind, and Spanish literature could ill lose either of them. Individual as Manrique's poem is, it is of deep significance in the movement of European letters. The burden of the "passing hour" which runs throughout the poem—

> "Where is the King Don Juan? Where
> Each royal prince and noble heir
> Of Aragon?
> . . . . . .
> Where are the high-born dames, and where
> Their gay attire, and jewelled hair,
> And odours sweet?
> . . . . . .
> Where is the song of Troubadour?
> Where are the lute and gay tambour
> They loved of yore?"[1]

—is the burden of Villon and Dunbar. We now read a deeper meaning in the French poet's reverie on the "snows of yester-year," and discover in this wonderful unison of the greatest poets of their age, in the greatest moments, the *leit-motiv* and essential harmony of the Great Transition. But in Spain, as indeed elsewhere, it is but a momentary inspiration. Manrique's contemporaries showed their appreciation by glossing and re-glossing his verses, till in the next century they are completely buried under a mass of commentary. The commonplace Italianate poetry is continued in the dreary religious visions and exhortations of Juan de Padilla (1468-?1520);

Significance of the Lament.

[1] Longfellow's translation.

and on the threshold of the next century by the Urreas, though to perhaps better purpose by Pedro Manuel de Urrea (*d.* 1530), an enthusiastic student of Petrarch.

A 'popular' strain.

Outside this courtly verse there are a few minor productions whose tone is more popular and *bourgeois*. They are exceptional, and do not illustrate any general tendency such as we find in France, Italy, or England. The chief are the *Coplas del Provincial* and the *Coplas de Mingo Revulgo*. The first would appear to have no further intention than to indulge the coarse humour and burlesque which never failed to please the dignified Spaniard in his undress moments — which lurks in the religious verse of the Cancioneros, and amused the grandees in the *burlas* of the tailor Montoro. The other, however, is a class-dialogue between two puppets—Mingo, a kind of Spanish 'John-the-Commonweill,' and Gil Aribato, who would blame the people for the evils of the time. Its conclusion in honour of the middle class is not much more than a dialectical compromise, for it lacks the literary and social significance which attaches to its foreign counterparts. It is more interesting to note that, like these expressions of the *bourgeois* spirit, it inclines to the dramatic form. There is a nearer approach to these, both in dramatic quality and in cynical purpose, in the *Diálogo entre el Amor y un Viejo* of Rodrigo Cota, who wrote at the close of the century.

Its limitations.

As far as I am aware, Spanish literature in the

fifteenth century escapes the nightmare of the Dance of Death, though the fourteenth century closed with the anonymous *Danza de la Muerte*, and Carbonell in the sixteenth returns to the grizzly theme. Mr Fitzmaurice-Kelly assumes that the earlier poem was occasioned by the last devastation of the Black Death (1394-99); and the inference may be strengthened by the analogy of the Florentine triumph of 1512.[1] It would appear that neither the Italian nor the Spaniard was attracted to the subject except under the most extreme circumstances of real horror.

The Dance of Death.

When the Golden Age dawns, the subjection of Spanish verse of culture to foreign influence is complete. From Santillana's time the poets had played with both Provençal and Italian, inclining more and more to the latter, borrowing its themes, and copying, in their own careless way, the formal beauties of its verse. What there was of more purely national quality does not become strongly evident till the larger current of the sixteenth century gives strength to these eddies and counter-currents.

Triumph of the Italian manner.

In Portugal the influence of Castilian literature had been making headway. From the earliest period there had been a conflict of foreign influences in the Court Poetry. The most marked rivalry lay between its neighbour and cousin the Galician and the Provençal; but by the middle of the thirteenth century the domination of the latter

Portuguese poetry.

[1] *Ante*, p. 145.

was complete. Within a century, however, the Portuguese poets had begun to affect the Castilian, both in subject and in the forms which were now acclimatised in Spain. But just on the eve of the fifteenth century the political troubles between Portugal and Castile interrupted this tendency, and the older Galician enjoyed a short spell of royal favour. The models were chiefly those poets already referred to as the representatives of the declining Galician in the older Spanish *Cancioneros*—Rodríguez del Padron, and, above all, Macías ("El Enamorado") of Villena's household, the love-mad poetaster whose death became the abiding theme of both Portuguese and Spanish poets. This phase soon passed, and Juan de Mena usurped the place of Macías in Portuguese letters. There is therefore little to add to what has been said in connection with Spanish, for what is characteristic of the school of Mena explains Luis de Azevedo, Ayres Telles, and Diogo Brandão, and many more whose poems are preserved in the Portuguese *Cancioneiro Geral*.[1] With the Castilian came the Italian influence, partly incorporated, partly direct, —the allegorical and Dantesque in the *Visão* of Duarte de Brito and the *Fingimento de Amor* of Fernão Brandão, and, to a degree, in the *Satyra de felice e infelice Vida* of the Constable of Portugal; and the 'classical,' at the very beginning of the next

[1] The chief early Portuguese *Cancioneiros* are—(1) *C. da Vaticana*, ed. Monaci (Halle, 1875) and Braga (Lisbon, 1878); (2) *C. Colocci-Brancuti*, ed. Molteni (Halle, 1880); (3) *C. de Ajuda*, ed. D. Carolina Michaelis de Vasconcellos (Lisbon, in the press); and (4) *C. Geral* of Garcio de Resende (Stuttgart, 1846, 1848, &c.)

century, in the *Eclogues* of Bernardim Ribeiro and Christovão Falcão, who herald the dawn of Portugal's Golden Age.

To turn from the poetry of the Peninsula to that of the German peoples is to leave the tiltyard for a city *Fest*. The metaphor seems just for other reasons than that the one is the expression of the chivalric idea and the other of the popular spirit. In Spanish verse there is unanimity of purpose. Poem follows poem, like the combats in the *Paso Honroso*, each, save by accident, the repetition of its fellow. There is but one object for the crazy knights and the interested crowd. German verse, on the other hand, has not yet realised even a popular sentiment. It is on holiday, passing from booth to booth, less pleased with the ballads, the farces, or the 'chained Saracen,' than with its own aimless freedom. Not only is this verse-making miscellaneous in character, but it produces nothing which is either original or memorable, unless we except the *Narrenschiff* which appears at the close of the century; and even the interest of Brant's poem lies more in its influence on European letters than in any poetic merit of its own. The marvellous craftsmanship of these worthy burghers could not help them to a poetic idea, and they remain but poor artificers of *Weinsegen*, *Klopfan*, *Priameln*, and *Sprüchen*, such things as Providence has given to a comfortable *bourgeoisie* for its evening solace. An occasional song or a note of chivalry recalls the tradition of the Minnesingers, but only to emphasise the

The Spanish and German moods contrasted.

spiritual depression of the time. There is an absence of the erratic activity either of ideas or of individuals which marks the transitional stage of a great literature, no mood of expectancy in the best of these commonplace people. The Renaissance has hardly touched them yet; and there is no suggestion till the religious upheaval at the close whether they will be finally attracted by the academic or by the æsthetic side of the Revival. There are more definite indications of an individual literary principle in the drama and in the prose.

General character of German poetry.

A brief glance backwards is necessary to the better understanding of their poetic conditions. In the decadence of the old lyric poetry or Minnesong there is a double line of descent. There is, on the one hand, the straggling band of knightly singers who continue the courtly tradition, and are stimulated by the example of Walther von der Vogelweide and by the popular poetry of which Walther's was to a considerable extent the outcome; and, on the other hand, there are the popular poets who had derived their canons from the Minnesingers. The chivalric ideal, expressed in the *Frauendienst* of the old poetry, gradually fades before the more practical and occasional demands of the burgher muse. In this fact we find the origin of the Meistersong, which in its earlier phase is nothing but the Minnesong translated into popular terms. The "Masters" were the people's troubadours, and, though they sang a little less of love's service, and were fonder of satires and sermons, they followed the traditions of the older

The relation of the Minnesong to the Meistersong.

art. Parallel with this runs the romantic verse of the beggar minstrels, with a tradition as old as the Minnesong. It had given themes to both the Minnesong and Meistersong, but as time passed these drew further apart. The latter especially, in its second and more familiar phase in the sixteenth century, stood out in marked opposition as a sort of poetic gild with its strict rules contemning the uncovenanted singers of the highway. In the fifteenth century this antipathy is already discernible.

The main varieties of German verse.

The verse of the century falls, therefore, into three categories,—the chivalric, the *bourgeois*, and the so-called 'popular.' With the first and second, which are really the chief *genres*, we may associate all the remaining poetical forms; with the first, the fragments of courtly epic, and with the second, the didactic and satirical and dramatic verse. The third, which is concerned with the *Volkslieder*, is reserved for our consideration of the ballads, and the drama for its special chapter.

The dying poetry of chivalry.

The chivalric poetry is the merest fragment. Hugo or Haug, eighth Count of Montfort (1357-1423), is hardly of the fifteenth century, but literary habit has associated him with Oswald von Wolkenstein, who though born in 1367 did not die till 1445. Thirty-eight songs of Ritter Montfort[1] are preserved in a Heidelberg MS. These appear, from the printed portions, to maintain the character of the old Minnesong, both in its rhythmic facility and in its theme of service to God and fair ladies. Oswald

[1] Ed. Bartsch, 1879; Wackernell, 1880.

von Wolkenstein[1] has been aptly called "the last of the Minnesingers." He might have been Chaucer's model for his knight, had such models been rare, for he won his spurs on the same fields, "as wel in Cristendome as hethenesse." During these stirring years he wrote many songs to airs of his own composing. These he collected in 1425 in a manuscript which is preserved in the Imperial Library at Vienna. They contain the last song-notes of the old chivalry. Even the epical vigour is failing, and may be said to be quite dead after a spasmodic revival at the opening of the next century. Ulrich Fürterer wrote his *Buch der Abenteuer*[2] about 1478. It was done by command of the Duke of Bavaria, and was intended to be a kind of 'Heldenbuch' of Arthurian story. But a greater interest attaches to the epic of *Theuerdank* of the Emperor Maximilian I., who is honoured as "the last of the Knights." In this work, which was printed in 1517, the romantic allegorical tone just escapes the suspicion of being a *pastiche* from the fact that the poem is autobiographic in intention. In any one else the illusion would have been impossible, for Maximilian realised out of his time, and without becoming fantastic, even the details of antique custom. It is probable that his own and succeeding generations appreciated the episodes and the love-making of the hero Theuerdank (Maximilian himself) and the princess Ehrenreich (Rich-in-Honour), and the machinations of Unfalo (Evil Destiny) and his friends, as a kind of popular play or morality rather than

[1] Ed. Zingerle, 1870. [2] Ed. Peter, 1885.

as an old knight's allegory. These four authors are the sole representatives of original chivalric poetry throughout the century. Niclas von Wyle, though a Humanist, had something of the same spirit in him, but he made choice of prose when he wrote his book in praise of the Fair Sex (1474). We may also record the collection and reproduction at this time of the more famous examples of an earlier period, such as that by Püterich von Reicherzhausen, the 'Ambraser' *Heldenbuch* made by command of Maximilian, editions of *Parcifal* (1477) and *Titurel* (1477), and of the thirteenth-century lyrist Neidhart von Neuenthal, the fourteenth-century didactic poet Hugo von Trimberg, and the fabulist Ulrich Boner (1461). Yet it would be a mistake to interpret this activity as proof of even a moderate sympathy with Minnesong tradition. The example and influence of courts like Maximilian's could not fail to stimulate an antiquarianism, the more so as original effort was so rare; and the whim of the first printers was undoubtedly in some cases the only cause. That the demand was fictitious or temporary is proved by the fact that the pieces were not reprinted. The few which survived owed their popularity to being rewritten in prose. The collection of "Heldengedichte," made by Kaspar von der Roen and an unknown collaborator in 1472, is, like the Strassburg 'Heldenbuch,' more popular in character, and belongs rather to the category of 'Volksepos.'

Verse-making had become the monopoly of the burghers, who not only developed the democratic idea

in the Meistersong and other *genres*, but occasionally usurped the courtly function of the earlier poets. Thus Michel Behaim or Peham (1416-1474) frequented the courts of Brandenburg, Austria, Hungary, Heidelberg, and the Empire, and there sang his songs and recited his historical poems; and Hans Rosenblüt (*fl.* 1450), the Nürnberg blazoner, made his heraldry the excuse for poetical conceits on the names and arms of knightly customers. Accident took these men to court; they were not of the court; they remained Meistersingers. They were received for their music rather than for their poems. In the next century the princes had no further need of them, when the fashion demanded more elaborate harmonies and a more highly developed musical technique.

The burgher verse.

The Meistersong represents only one phase of the general movement in German verse, but it is the most highly developed. It is in a sense the least representative of the popular instinct, for the reason that it relied more and more on mere literary artifice. The fact, however, that it was then for the most part spiritual or religious in *motif*, and that it was entirely so after the Reformation, may appear to be evidence that it really reflected the national thought. In the fifteenth century, certainly, it is only a partial expression of the general process. It rapidly tended to become the business of a set of gilds of the most exclusive and professional kind. It was in reality passing through a stage similar to that which marks the decadence of the Minnesong and indeed of most literary forms; and the popular energy

The earlier Meistersong.

which it more and more despised found an outlet in the *Volkslied*, and especially in the drama and prose-tale. In our period, however, it had not yet reached the unyielding formality which Wagner has pictured. It had passed from the imitative stage of the older lyrical art, which had become soulless and uninteresting, to a second stage in which the Masters made a deliberate effort to add variety, though on prescribed lines. To this end they fixed a 'Tabulatur' or code of rules, from the study of which the 'Schüler' rose through the degrees of 'Schulfreund,' 'Singer,' and 'Dichter' to the complete 'Meister,' who had the right and the presumed ability to experiment in new metres and harmonies. Each song ('Bar') had its formal divisions into strophes, and each strophe its 'Stollen' and 'Abgesang'; and in due course there was a long list of authorised melodies, distinguished by such fantastic titles as 'The Fat-Badger' (*die Fett-Dachsweis*), 'The High-Heavens' (*die hohe Firmamentweis*), 'The Paper-and-Ink' (*Schreibpapier und Schwarztintenweis*). Each Master had his own special office; he was the critic of the verses ('Merkmeister'), or the keeper of the records of the school ('Schlüsselmeister'), or the prize-presenter ('Kronenmeister'), or something else. Everything was provided for, except the possibility of poetic inspiration, and it is easy to see that what of that there was at the beginning would be inevitably crushed out by an over-elaborated convention.[1]

[1] An elaborate analogy to the functions and organisation of the Meistersingers is supplied by the Dutch 'Rederijkerskamers' from

This tendency spread beyond the Meistersong into the didactic verse, as appears in the forms prevalent about the middle of the century. They are generally short and of the character of a conceit; and they are constructed according to fixed rules. The chief forms are the *Klopfan*, the *Priamel*, the *Weingruss* and *Weinsegen*, and the *Räthsel*. The first, which was much in vogue in Nürnberg, was simply a strophe of good advice in the form of a New Year's wish. The *Priamel* (i.e., *praeambulum* or prelude) was a matter of mere ingenuity. It consisted of a number of short sentiments or descriptive lines, seemingly quite unconnected and even contrary in meaning, with an apodosis, generally a single line, in which the common element or idea of the series was stated. Formally it is a completed *Räthsel*, and just as far removed from poetic capability.[1] These verses are generally anonymous, and they linger among the Meistersingers as relics of the ingenuity of Freidank and the thirteenth-century didactic poets. The *Weingruss* and *Weinsegen*, a sort of grace before and after drinking, developed from the *Weinschwelg* of that time, became, especially in its second variety, one of the most popular literary amusements of the convivial burghers. There was thus in all departments of popular verse, and even to some extent in the *Volkslieder*, much formal pedantry, with hardly an

The didactic verse.

the close of the fourteenth century onwards. An excellent account of these, with detailed references, will be found in Jan te Winkel's chapter in Paul's *Grundriss d. Germ. Phil.*, II. i. 478-484.

[1] There is some resemblance to this in the idea of No. IV. of the *Songs and Carols of the Fifteenth Century* (Percy Society).

inspired gleam either in the lyric or didactic verse. The canker spread, till at the end of the century it called forth Brant's satire on the peddling writers and silly printers, and in our own day, by the historical insight of a modern poet, the protest of the young *ritter* Walther von Stolzing, who proclaims the greater Walther and the birds of the forest his poetic masters.

Various verse-makers.

With the exception of Sebastian Brant, there is no outstanding poet, but the "various hands" who contributed to the century's "Miscellany" may be put on record. Michel Behaim has been mentioned. Jakob (Jeckel) Kebicz (*fl.* 1450) has left a small collection of Meistersongs and the fame of a mighty thirst. Hans Folz (*fl.* 1480), the Nürnberg barber, and one of Hans Sachs's twelve Masters of Song, was the author of a number of Meistersongs, *Sprüchen* (apophthegms) and *Schwänken* (drolleries), as well as Carnival plays (*Fastnachtspielen*). A similar round of pieces were written by Hans Rosenblüt, *alias* Hans Schepperer or the "Tattler" (*fl.* 1450), as well as the *Wappensprüche*, referred to above, and a number of *Klopfan*, *Priameln*, and *Weinsegen*. On the more exclusively religious and mystical side is Heinrich von Laufenberg, Dean of Freiburg (*d.* about 1453). He endeavoured to spiritualise the more popular songs, by keeping not only the familiar airs, but in many cases the very words and phrases, in which he developed a new mystical meaning. His *Spiegel des Menschlichen Heils* (1437) and his *Buch von Figuren* (1441) are conceived in the same spirit. The remaining

poetic activity, which was not absorbed in the popular drama, was occupied in the recasting and printing of the older popular epic; and of this the most important specimens are the Low German version of the *Renart* in the *Reineke Voss* (1498) of Hermann Barthusen or of Nikolaus Baumann, and the Strassburg edition of the Hildebrant Volkslied.

Brant's Narrenschiff.

The most notable work, and at the same time the most expressive of the mood of the epoch, is the well-known *Narrenschiff*[1] of Sebastian Brant (1456, 1457-1521), syndic of Strassburg. Considered on its own merits, it is a rather wearisome series of satirical panels, in each of which the author exposes a particular sin in the guise of a fool. Tradition was satisfied with seven, though 'deadly'; but Brant compasses one hundred and thirteen greater and minor vices. This motley collection sets sail in a ship and steers past "Schluraffenlandt" or the realm of Indolence, to "Narragonia" or the Fool's Paradise. The allegory is poorly sustained; and the author's main intention is to portray, in regular succession, the particular folly of each of his godless crew. He interprets folly in the stronger Scriptural sense, as a moral abomination rather than an idiocy, and in this earnestness he occasionally redeems his lack of art by the sheer pungency of his invective. The chief interest, however, of the poem lies in its historical and comparative bearings: in its formal relation to previous popular literature, as summing up the tendencies of that literature, and hinting at the advent of Humanism;

[1] Ed. Fr. Zarncke, 1854.

and as supplying a universal model of satire, for many years to come. There is nothing original in Brant's external method. As early as 1460 the Fool had appeared in effigy on rough broad-sheets. The style and detail of these rare woodcuts compel the conclusion that the *Narrenschiff* was to a large extent an adaptation of familiar popular material, not only in the use of illustrations, which show a remarkable similarity in the outlines, but in the reproduction of the first words of the letterpress descriptions — "Der ist ain narr" — at the head of the sections.[1] Nor is the literary intention of the poem strikingly original; but it is important because the popular tendencies are mirrored more fully in it than in any other contemporary work in Germany. Not only does it supply the individual interest which belongs to all the efforts of the *bourgeoisie* in contrast with the formalism of the Meistersong or the unreasoning conservatism of the early printers and editors, but it is, as it were, a replica of the dramatic manner of the rising democratic literature. In the *Narrenschiff*, as in the *Sotties*, the Fool is the central figure. Sketch follows sketch like the episodes in these popular plays, in the one a casual allegory, in the other incomplete dramatic action. The literary element in both is subordinated, in the one to the woodcuts, in the other to the rough *mise en scène*, and Brant's pictures, which inspire, rather than illustrate, his lines, supply the dramatic realism which the *bourgeoisie* demanded. The chief importance of

Its historical bearings

[1] See the reproductions in Könnecke's *Bilderatlas*, pp. 58, 59.

the *Narrenschiff* lies in its literary influence in Germany and elsewhere, an influence of deeper significance than that which it exerted as a mere book of the people. Johannes Geiler von Kaisersberg (1445-1510), the great Strassburg preacher, made it a text for his discourses; Jacob Locher translated it into Latin in 1497, and an unknown writer recast it in 1507; Erasmus is indebted to it in his *Encomium Moriae* (1509); and Thomas Murner is Brant's pupil in his remarkable series of 'fooleries,' the *Von dem Grossen lutherischen Narren* (a satire on the Reformation), the *Schelmenzunft* (*The Knaves' Gild*), the *Gauchmatte* (*Fool's Meadow*), and especially the *Narrenbeschwörung* (*The Exorcism of Fools*), published in 1512, in which the journey of the Fools to Welschland is an obvious reminiscence of the rowdy voyage to Narragonia. The *Narrenschiff* was translated into French, Dutch, and English; into the last by Alexander Barclay (*ante*, p. 31).[1]

and influence.

Barclay's translation.

This version is more than a mere Englishing in the stricter sense, as Barclay confesses in his apologetic preface. The setting is English and the preachment is for English ears; but the main lines are those of Brant, or rather Locher, and the woodcuts are poor copies of the German originals. It would be hard to say that Barclay makes amends in his text for the shortcomings of his engraver, for his Fools are very tedious people. The tincture of Humanism which some have seen in the

[1] Printed by Pynson in 1509. Last reprinted 1874 (ed. Jamieson), 2 vols.

marginal references to Seneca, Ovid, Juvenal, and other classical writers, is of a very doubtful kind, and is more akin to the irresponsible learning of earlier didactic poetry than to the new scholarship. Brant's slender claim on this score must rest on his translations of some late Latin moral discourses. His other important work, the rendering of Freidank's *Bescheidenheit*, is, as the title would suggest, a popular didactic work, and little more than a mosaic of proverbial saws.

With Brant, at the close of the century, German verse has wheeled round to the popular side from the Rosenblüts and Folzes. Hans Sachs and Jacob Ayrer, as representing the completed crystallisation of poetry in the Meistersong, make a protest on behalf of formal art, but the destiny of German poetry, as far as it has any destiny in the coming religious strife, lies rather with Brant's followers, with Murner, Fischart, Wolfhart Spangenberg, and, in the seventeenth century, Christian Weise. It inclines more and more to that coarser side, already reached by other nations, which is shown in the prose of the *Till Eulenspiegel* and in the literature in honour of St Grobianus, the dirty patron of the next century whom Brant himself had canonised.

The destiny of German poetry.

CHAPTER VI.

THE PROBLEM OF THE BALLADS AND POPULAR SONGS.

THE PERIOD OF ORIGIN—A FALSE DEDUCTION—NOT A POPULAR "GENRE" —THE "LITERARY" QUALITIES—THE PARALYSIS OF MEDIÆVAL SENTIMENT—FURTHER DEGENERACY IN THE BALLAD—THE EARLIEST BALLADS AND POPULAR SONGS—DIVISIONS: ILLUSTRATED FROM TH PERCY 'FOLIO'—I. THE ROMANTIC MATERIAL—EVOLUTION FROM THE ROMANCE AND ROMANCE-POEM: (A) IN TREATMENT OF SUBJECT; (B) IN FORM—EVIDENCE FROM DUNBAR'S PROSODY; AND FROM 'TORRENT OF PORTUGAL'—THE MINOR CHARACTERS OF THE ROMANCES—THE MATERIAL OF THE "FABLIAU" TYPE—THE 'NUT-BROWN MAID'—II. THE HISTORICAL TYPE—THE SCOTTISH BALLADS —LATER POPULARITY OF THE BALLAD IN SCOTLAND—THE PERSONAL TYPE—THE ROBIN HOOD CYCLE—THEIR SO-CALLED POPULAR CHARACTER—'JOHN DE REEVE'—THE POPULAR SONGS: THEIR VARIETIES—THE POLITICAL SONGS—THE SCOTTISH POPULAR SONGS— THE FRENCH "CHANSONS"—OF THEIR ANTAGONISM TO PREVAILING STYLES IN FRANCE—YET "LITERARY" IN QUALITY—THE MAIN SUBJECTS—OLIVIER BASSELIN—THE NOËLS—GENERAL CONCLUSIONS FROM THE FRENCH EVIDENCE—ITALIAN POPULAR SONG—ABSENCE OF THE HISTORICAL AND ROMANTIC ELEMENTS—THE MAIN THEME— THE FORMAL VARIETIES—THEIR "LITERARY" CHARACTERISTICS— CONSIDERATION OF THE "RISPETTI" AND "STORNELLI"—THE SPANISH BALLADS—THE TERM "ROMANZ"—THE LITERARY EVIDENCE OF BALLADS BEFORE THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY—THE EARLY "CANTARES DE GESTA"—THE EVOLUTION OF THE SPANISH BALLAD—DIFFI-CULTIES—GENERAL CONCLUSION—GERMANY—THE "VOLKSLIEDER"

—THEIR SO-CALLED "INDIVIDUAL QUALITY"—THE RELATION TO THE KNIGHTLY AND GILD POETRY—THE DISINTEGRATION OF THE EPIC—THE HISTORICAL IDEA—CONCLUSIONS.

IT is now fairly established that the oldest extant examples of ballad literature cannot be ascribed to an earlier date than the second or third quarters of the fifteenth century; but whether these examples are approximately the very first—in other words, whether the ballad obtained vogue as a distinct literary form about the fifteenth century—is, unfortunately, still a critics' quarrel. The suggestion seriously disturbs the 'prehistoric' theorists, who, having lost conceit of the Ancient Minstrel, believe in "communal authorship." To them the ballad is a thing "springing from the heart of the people"—or, more correctly, from the legs, since the dance-rhythms are said to have been the primeval inspiration. The theory of a late origin appears only a little less absurd to another set of critics, who, wishing to make a compromise between antiquity and modern literary art, refer the supposed originals of the earliest extant copies to a period preceding the rise of the literary romance. The third view, which stands in direct antagonism to the folk-theory, and is sceptical of the præ-romance hypothesis, would explain the phenomenon as a *literary* survival or *rechauffé*, towards the close of the Middle Ages, of certain pre-existing literary forms. The comfort of the matter to each dogmatist is that in the absence of data it is hard to prove the unreasonableness of his view. If, therefore, I venture to state what appears to me the stronger

The period of origin.

claims of the theory of a later origin, I do so simply to add to the gaiety of the ballad symposium, and with no desire to vex or to convince either the folklorists or the friends of the Ancient Minstrel.

It may be premised that it is an error, both historical and critical, to consider the appearance of the ballad in the fifteenth century as a kind of popular upheaval or protest against the general poetic decadence and artificiality. It is tempting to describe it as part of the social and æsthetic reaction of the century: as making common cause with the prose idea in transforming the old chivalric sentiment, the one by the method of the epitome, the other by that of digression; and, again, as opposing the tendency to the mere barrenness of the *rhétoriqueurs* by the infusion of a directness and a simplicity of expression. In this view the relationship of the ballad to contemporary poetry is that of the *rustres* to the *gorgias* of the French songs of the century, where *rustre* signifies not merely the bumpkin but the man well-thewed and vigorous, in contrast with the luxurious exquisite. The statement is a natural, but false, deduction from the premisses that the century marks the rise of the popular spirit and that it is also the time of ballad activity thoughout Europe.

A false deduction.

The ballad is not, æsthetically, a 'popular' *genre*. It is a 'literary' product, both in matter and in structure; and some of the characteristics which are to modern eyes the hall-mark of ballad-style are proof less of native simplicity and vigour than of the atrophy of romantic tradition. In this

Not a popular genre.

matter we have rather thoughtlessly adopted the view of the eighteenth century, which professed that it had found in the old verse the arcana of artistic sincerity; whereas the real critical interest, if that century could have gauged it, lay in the quaintness, the strangeness, the variety, in the difference of kind between that material and its own jaded classicism. I confess it would be difficult to justify the separation of much of the material referred to in this chapter from what has been already discussed. There is no essential æsthetic difference between them. Many of the ballads and popular songs might have been written by the Skeltons and Villons; in some cases there are grounds for suspecting that they were. It would almost appear as if anonymity were a leading attribute of the ballad form. Nor is the widespread existence of certain ballad ideas, the interaction, for example, between the English and Scottish poems (and in the melodies, as well as in the words), to be accepted as proof of a folk-origin antecedent to individual literary effort. They may quite as well be the 'literary' copies of previous 'literary' versions, and the national varieties of any given theme may be analogues only in the sense that each is the refurbishing by the Englishman, the Scot, the Norseman, or the Frenchman, of an earlier poem by a forgotten singer.[1] We have but to think of the literary

[1] And not merely analogues, if we accept, as I think we must, the view of Mr Vigfusson and Prof. York Powell, that the ballad-impulse in Denmark came from this island (See *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, vol. i. pp. 504, 505).

influence of a poet such as Chaucer to see the arbitrariness of concluding in favour of a folk-origin.

Even if we neglect the testimony of the fifteenth century that certain *known* poets did engage in ballad-making,[1] just as later poets have done and perhaps in the same spirit, it would be hard to prove from the ballads themselves that they either show any primitive intention or stand in protest against the rhetorical tendencies of the late Middle Ages. It would certainly be more difficult to find such qualities in the remains of the fifteenth century than in the later examples. Not only are many of the earliest ballads epitomes of romances, such as *Sir Lambwell* and *Sir Degree*, but in their treatment of that material they are not, in any honest sense of the term, spontaneous. The ballad is a congested form, and is for that reason more liable to mere tricks of style. It is written in a kind of descriptive or epithetic shorthand; and this manner, though it suggests at times, by lucky accident, a certain quality of vigour and directness, is really the outcome of the same literary mood which produced the aureate speech or Cretinism of the cultured verse of the period. The familiar devices of making one line echo another, of introducing inversion in the second line ("These were the words, said he"), and of using unnatural masculine rhymes —the delight of parodists—come within the category of poetic diction and artifice. The persistent use of

The 'literary' qualities.

[1] Dunbar's reference to "ballat-making," in his *Lament for the Makaris*, is probably of doubtful value, but Henryson's earlier *Bludy Serk* is a ballad in the strictest sense, both in method and metre.

the number 'three' and other stereotyped formulæ can hardly be identified as the rude endeavour after pictorial detail which is found in the Eastern folk-tales and their European derivatives. It is not only that, to name but a few, there are "three squires" with Robin Hood, and "three Palmers," that the ladies in the French *chansons* are always "troys gentes damoiselles" or "troys jeunes fillettes," that Sir Gawaine's "three points (virtues)" are put to the test, and that the Heir of Lin "has never a penny but three," but that the episodes and descriptive passages, such as the scenery through which the hero passes, and even the central ideas of the poems, are worked up in this way. So that, instead of finding a hoary tradition or an irresponsible popular manner in this artifice, we incline to conclude that it is special proof of a late origin,[1] and even to discover some psychological analogy with such phenomena as the prose-triads of Berners or of Lyly or of Johnson. Nor is the peculiar rhythm of the English ballad a popular creation, any more than the Meistersong is a metrical formation apart from the Minnesong, or the *chansons*, even of the most rustic type, are not derived ultimately from the courtly *musique*;[2] and the common form of the ballad-stave seems to be, as I shall presently endeavour to show, not a metrical survival of remote times, but an easy literary result from the

[1] Dr Murray corroborates this in a note in his edition of *Thomas of Erceldoune* (p. lxxiv, note to l. 230).

[2] *Musique*, as M. Gaston Paris has pointed out, is fifteenth century for "musical composition," in contrast with the melodies of the *chants ruraux*.

prosody of the romances. The explanation of the assonance of the English ballads as an echo of the simpler art of the days of "communal authorship" appears to me more picturesque than convincing. Assonance is not a characteristic of English verse, unless it be a pretty name for bad rhyme. And that the so-called examples are in most cases mere metrical faults—the result of careless oral transmission, or the handiwork of Mr Courthope's "degenerate minstrels"—is just as obvious as that the accentuation of "body" is the trick of the necessitous rhymester. Such things may give a piquancy to *our* enjoyment of the older ballads, but they are in themselves no proof that the ballads deserve the dignity of literary fossils.

Further cumulative evidence of the lateness of the ballads is afforded by the fact that the old romantic *ensemble* is broken up, that the minor characters, some of which are new creations, become the nuclei of fresh versions, and that there is a decided historical quality in so much of the work which is undoubtedly of the fifteenth century. We shall return to these points when we discuss the material of the Percy *Folio*.

The sum of these considerations is that we must consider the ballad as part of the literary débris of the Middle Ages. Theoretically, therefore, it should be most in evidence in the period of transition, between the destruction of the old and the rebuilding of the new; and it is just at this time, in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries, that we find the earliest traces

and the fullest development of ballad and popular song throughout Europe. The ballad more than any other literary form of this time shows the paralysis of mediæval sentiment. Under the quickening influence of the popular renascence the outworn *dit* is merged in the drama, the lumbering style of the author of *Renart* or of Jean de Meun and his imitators is refashioned in the later satire, the spirit of the romances revives in the novels, and the poetical art of the Courts of Love takes fresh form in the *trecentisti* and their followers throughout Europe. The ballad, on the contrary, has no motive force; it represents, despite occasional happy reminiscences of the spirit of the old *gest* and the accidental beauties of brevity, either a failing or a temporary literary condition. It is noteworthy that in its moral intention it is, in general,[1] untouched by the coarseness, and especially the cynicism, which is so strongly stamped on the literature of the close of the fifteenth century, and that it held out till the seventeenth century against the temptation to the comic to which all the varieties of popular literature had readily yielded. It escapes the *bourgeois* influence just because it preserves the tradition of the older romance and fabliau; but the price of its immunity from this spiritual libertinism was the denial to it of a destiny in European letters. It has inspired only the *pastiches* of later poets, to whom the Middle Ages

The paralysis of mediæval sentiment.

[1] Except in the "Loose Songs" of the Percy *Folio*, printed in supplement by the editors; but these songs are more lustily indecent than vicious. These pieces, however, are probably of a later date.

were otherwise a closed book, and it has lost much of its original rough beauty by the unceasing botching of ingenious antiquaries.

Degeneracy begins as ballad-singing and ballad-making become a sort of professional work for the Deloneys and Sheales, when the public grows to the habit of discussing current events in pamphlets and sheets of verse. The seventeenth century found in the old ballads models for contemporary treatment, and it also popularised the older versions, in the sense not only of repeating and recasting them, but of infusing into them a plebeian flavour which was unknown to the earlier copies. The muddle of later criticism regarding the 'popular' quality of the ballad has largely arisen from a misunderstanding of these facts,—that most of the versions are those which were sung by the 'blind crowders' and the 'running stationers' of the early seventeenth century, and that some of them are a 'popular edition' of the older verses, like the "Jigge" founded on the *Nut-Brown Maid*, where a mere soldier and his wench usurp the places of the earl's son and baron's daughter of the exquisite original. The first ballads are the best, because they are the outcome of the artistic conditions of the epoch, decadent though these conditions were. They lose their *raison d'être* as a literary form when a definite principle emerges from the chaos of the fifteenth century.[1] There can be no question

Further degeneracy in the ballad.

[1] The early fifteenth century, it may be noted, is the assumed period of the dispersion of the Gypsies throughout Europe. It would

of the literary character of the popular songs and carols. The lyrical qualities of the themes and the formal variety imply individual authorship, though the record of that authorship has not survived. *Prima facie* it would appear less absurd to search for a folk-strain in these pieces, which are the simple expression of things eternally human, than in the more elaborate and more 'occasional' ballads.

The earliest ballads and popular songs.

It is not an easy matter to identify what belongs to the fifteenth century in the many collections of English popular poetry, from Percy's historic *Folio* to Professor Child's five volumes. The editors, with some justification, make no problem of chronology. The greater portion of their material is obviously late, dating from the seventeenth century onwards; some of the pieces are in the late versions, but have a suspicious air of the early sixteenth century; only a few can be ascribed with any degree of certainty to the fifteenth. Of the last the most satisfactory evidence is found in the Percy *Folio*.[1] Though the examples there must represent but a part of the ballad literature of that time, they may be considered as fairly typical of the so-called popular Muse. We can be more definite in the case of the Songs and Carols, for the manuscripts of four interesting collections date from the

be hard to prove that they aided the rise and circulation of the ballads and popular songs in, and between, the different European nations, but the speculation is fascinating.

[1] Ed. Hales & Furnivall. 3 vols. London, 1867-68.

close of the century,[1] and have such a family likeness that further material is hardly necessary to an adequate appreciation of the variety.

Divisions: illustrated from the Percy Folio.

The early ballads fall into two main groups,—those which are directly related to the romances and fabliaux, and those which have an historical or presumed historical intention. The first may be subdivided into those derived from the romances, of the type of *King Arthur and the King of Cornwall*, and those derived from the fabliaux, or restating the familiar arguments of the fabliaux, such as *Childe Waters* or the *Nut-Brown Maid*. The second may be either national, as *Chevy Chase* or the *Rose of England*, or personal, in the spirit of *Hereford and Norfolke* or the disputed *Sir Aldingar*.

I. The romantic material.

In Percy's *Folio* only a portion of the romantic material is in strict ballad form, but its association in the MS. with the other metrical abridgments of the older poems is of great critical interest. We have, so to speak, different stages of development, and though the ballads of the *Folio* are probably later than the fifteenth century or are not the first versions, and though some of the romance epitomes never, as far as we know, reached the ballad

[1] *Songs and Carols of the Fifteenth Century*, ed. Thomas Wright (from a MS. in his possession), Percy Society, 1847; *Early English Miscellanies* (from the Porkington MS.), ed. J. O. Halliwell, Warton Club, 1855; *Songs and Carols* (B.M. MS. No. 2593), ed. Thomas Wright, Warton Club, 1856; and *English Carols of the Fifteenth Century* (from a MS. Roll in Trin. Coll., Camb.), ed. J. A. Fuller-Maitland, London, *n.d.* See also *Reliquiæ Antiquæ*, 1841-43, *passim*.

stage, yet they represent the chief phases in the evolution of the literary form.

An obvious example of the completed phase is *The Marriage of Sir Gawaine*, which, according to Sir Frederick Madden, is based on the older *Weddynge of Sir Gawen and Dame Ragnell*, the familiar tale of the hag-wife transformed over-night into a lovely young bride, which is told by Chaucer's Wife of Bath. *King Arthur and the King of Cornwall* would appear from the text of the Percy version to belong to the sixteenth century, but it may have been balladised earlier. It is founded on the Charlemagne romance which describes the *gabs* (boastings) of the Emperor and his comrades at the Court of King Hugon.[1] In addition to these the *Folio* contains at least three other Gawain pieces,—the *Turke and Gowin*, with a digression in fifteenth-century manner on the shortcomings of the clergy, *The Grene Knight*, with its allusions to the Castle of Hutton, which dates from this century, and the *Carle of Carlile*. The *Turke* and the *Grene Knight* are in six-lined staves; the last is in the older romance couplets. The other romance-poems in the *Folio* are *Sir Lambewell*, a version of *Sir Lanval* or Launfal, in couplets, and later than Thomas Chestre's stanzaic version of the same romance,[2] *Eger and Grine* and *Sir Degree* (*i.e.*, Degoré), both in couplets, *Sir Triamore*, the Arthurian

[1] "Transferred at a later period to the prose romance of Galien Rethoré, printed by Vérard, fol., 1500, and often afterwards—Madden"; quoted in Hales & Furnivall's edition of the Percy *Folio*.

[2] *Ante*, chap. i. p. 33.

Libius Disconius, and *Guy and Colebrande* in sixes, and *Eglamore* in twelves or double sixes. There are thus in the older portions of the *Folio* a variety of phases in the treatment of romance subjects; and their presence together is in itself suggestive of a formative or transitional condition. There is, in the first place, the modification of the literary idea, —the contraction of the long romance into the romance-poem, and of the romance-poem into the ballad. The first does not of course appear in a miscellany like the *Folio*, and the romance-poem is not always antecedent to the ballad, nor a necessary link in the chain; but the assumption is that the normal order is romance, romance-poem, ballad, as expressing the process of shrinkage in the literary conception. There is, in the second place, important evidence of an evolution in form which is in perfect analogy with the evolution in the romance-idea. This I may be permitted to discuss, though briefly, as I do not think it has been recognised in those quarters where any support of a theory of the late origin of the ballads must be welcome. The first stage in the transformation of the romance couplet appears in the six-lined and twelve-lined stanzas of the romance-poems, as found in the *Folio*, in the Thornton Romances (*Sir Isumbras, Sir Degrevant*, &c.), and in other pieces in collections like Weber's and Ritson's.[1] The six-lined

Evolution from the romance and romance-poem:

(a) *In treatment of subject.*

(b) *In form.*

[1] An intermediate variety appears in the 'ballet' *De nouem nobilibus* (Laing's *Ancient Popular and Romance Poetry*, p. 189), where the lines (all of four accents) are in couplets, but arranged in staves of six.

stanza is the commoner scheme, and the twelve-lined is really a double formation, sometimes the trick of the scribe, sometimes the whim of the poet when he would venture on using the same rhyme in the ninth and twelfth lines as in the third and sixth.[1] The normal stanza runs thus:—

> "Sir Marrocke said, 'Ladye, mercye!
> I said itt for noe villainé,
> by Jesu, heauen Kinge!
> but only for to proue your will,
> whether that you were good or ill,
> & for noe other thinge.'"—*Sir Triamore;*

which is the familiar *rime-couée* or tail-rhymed stanza, with four accents in the first, second, fourth, and fifth lines, and three accents in the third and sixth. This is just the ballad stanza with the first and third lines doubled, as in the *Marriage of Sir Gawaine* in the *Folio*—

> "And when he came to Merry Carlile,
> to his chamber he is gone;
> And ther came to him his Cozen Sir Gawaine,
> as he did make his mone."

I confess it may appear arbitrary to explain this stanza as a contracted form of the six-lined by merely relying on the fact that the rhythmical principle is the same in both, namely, an alternation of fours and threes. One might as reasonably maintain that the ballad-stave is a couplet of old-fashioned sevens

[1] Stanzas of nine and eighteen lines sometimes occur in the Romance-poems.

broken up by the copyist or printer into fours and threes. We can, however, refer to more definite data, such as is afforded in, say, the metrical romance of *Torrent of Portugal*,[1] and, more generally, in the verse of Dunbar, who is of first historical importance as a metrist. The matter of *Torrent of Portugal* is presumably the later romance-poem setting of an older romance, perhaps of French origin. It is written in the six-lined stanza, normally *aabccb*, but with many divergences in the length of the lines and in the rhyming, due to careless copying or incompetent verse-making. There are other variations which are of more critical value: as, for example, at line 430, where the second half of the verse is expanded into *cccb*; or at line 937, where the first half is *xaab*; or, again, at line 1506, where the head is further enlarged to *xxaab*. Dunbar has several examples of the twelve-lined stanza (*e.g.*, *The Dance* and *The Turnament*) or double romance-sixes with a single rhyme for the four short lines, and one of the normal six-lined stanza (*Of Sir Thomas Norray*). He indulges, however, in some interesting variations in the 'head' lines of the stanza. Thus, in the *Ballat of the Fenzeit Freir* each short line is preceded by three lines of four accents. It will not be disputed that this is a variant of the normal *rime-couée* stanza of the romances. If, therefore, poetical ingenuity enlarged the 'heads' of the stave, why might it not reduce them and try the effect of a single line as well

Evidence from Dunbar's prosody;

and from Torrent of Portugal.

[1] Ed. J. O. Halliwell, London, 1842; also, Adam (E.E.T.S., 1887).

as of two or three? The inference that the ballad-stave is but part of the metrical experiment, first in the romance, and, again, in the romance-poem, obtains further support from the intricate sub-varieties of the four-lined stanza. Dunbar sometimes adds internal rhyme, as in *Thir Ladies Fair*—

> "Thir ladyis fair, That makis repair,
> And in the Court ar kend"—

which has tempted some editors to print each strophe in twelve lines instead of eight.[1] At other times, he reduces the 'tail' to two accents, as in "Quha will behald of Luve the chance," or increases it to four, as in *Ane Ballat of the Passioun*. To four poems of Dunbar the manuscripts add the title of 'ballat' or 'ballate.' The only 'ballate' is that *Against Evil Wemen*, which is obviously a descendant through Chaucer (*cf.* "Against Women Unconstant") from the seven-line 'ballade' of Guillaume de Machaut, and belongs therefore to a different stave-category. The others, however, are all attuned to the rhythm of the *rime-couée*,—*The Fenzeit Freir*, *Of the Passioun*, already referred to, and *Of our Lady* (from the Asloan MS.), which, despite its over-elaboration by internal rhyme and its division into stanzas of twelve lines with but two rhymes,[2] yet suggests the swish of the 'tail.'

[1] The explanation of this stave in the Scottish Text Society's edition of Dunbar (I. cxci) is seriously vitiated by the error that "And in the Court ar kend" and its companions of the 'tail' are lines of *four* feet.

[2] Except in the ninth, which is in Latin.

It is therefore obvious that there was a considerable metrical elasticity in the romance staves, a fact which did not escape Chaucer when parodying the six-lined stanza in *Sir Thopas*; and there seems to be ground for the more particular proposition that the ballad, metrically as well as materially, is a direct result of the decomposition of the literary romance. The intermediate stage of the six-lined stanza is of course antecedent to our period, for Chaucer's burlesque and his picture of Harry Bailey's annoyance prove that it was already hackneyed; but of the further congested form, the ballad-stave proper, there is no authenticated example before the close of the fourteenth century. Hence it is natural to assume that the development of the latter falls within the fifteenth century, which, though blind to poetic perfection, was so sedulous in technical experiment.

An additional hint of the lateness of the balladised romance is afforded by the greater importance of the secondary characters of the Great Cycles and by the introduction of a number of new minor heroes. This became inevitable in mediæval as in classical literature, whenever the sustained and complete character of the traditional stories was no longer possible. Thus not only does Sir Bredbeddle become an important personage in *The Grene Knight*, or is *Younge Cloudeslee* advanced to the honour of a poem on his own affairs, but unknown knights like Sir Marramiles, in *King Arthur and the King of Cornwall*, take their place among the paladins. Chaucer may well be poking fun in his *Rime* at the

The minor characters of the romances.

nobodies of later romance, the Sir Thopases (or Topazes) and other 'gems' of knighthood.[1]

The material of the fabliau type.

Of pieces of the fabliau type there are several examples in the *Folio*; even though we believe, as we must in some cases, that we have not quite the earliest ballad version. To this class belong *Childe Waters*, a possible earlier version of the *Boy and Mantle*, *Childe* (otherwise *Gil*) *Maurice*, the *Adam Bell* set, and the immortal *Nut-Brown Maid*. These are all in the ballad-measure, with variations here and there in the length of the lines; but the last is rather exceptional in respect that in it the quatrains are grouped in threes—in stanzas of twelve lines—with an interlaced rhyme in the first and second sections (*abcb*|d*beb*|fghg). The lines are, as in the others, in accents of four and three alternately, but the stress varies in the long lines of nearly every stanza, and with such beautiful effect that it is impossible to gainsay its literary origin. Its appearance in Arnold's *Chronicle* (Antwerp, 1502) and again in the Balliol College MS. (say a decade later) are perhaps the earliest authenticated records of an English ballad, and even if these versions be not the first, it is difficult to antedate its origin by more than a century. Besides, there is in the literary quality of the ballads of this fabliau type evidence of a subtler and later art than we find in the romance-poems and their ballad off-shoots. The prevailing *motif*, the trial of woman's faithfulness—the feminine counterpart of the proba-

The Nut-Brown Maid.

[1] See the Oxford *Chaucer*, v. 183.

tion of the true knight—is of course older than the fabliaux themselves, but its treatment in the ballads, especially in such as the *Nut-Brown Maid*, is of a more advanced order of workmanship. It is difficult to accept any other conclusion than that, however much of the crowder and scribe there is in some of the extant versions, these so-called "romantic" ballads are comparatively late resettings, by unidentified poets, of the old matter of the fabliaux: or, to particularise, that the *Nut-Brown Maid* took shape under conditions, both of authorship and time, similar to those under which Henryson's *Robene and Makyne* and a score of other pieces of the kind were written. There is, I admit, a danger of indulging in that unwholesome scepticism which has prevailed since the days when editors and readers were so badly gulled by *Hardyknut* and other "ancient pieces," but there is something in the *timbre* of the oldest ballads which is altogether different from the mere voice of mediævalism. No one now will allow to the ballad *Edward, Edward* the antiquity which is implied in the approbation of Percy and some later editors: and it is just the presence of a half-modern quality, in varying degrees of obviousness, which is an insurmountable barrier to the simple faith in a remote origin of the ballads. And this obviousness remains, despite the most generous allowance for the touching up by later scribes and singers.

This criticism is, I venture to think, applicable with even greater force to the historical ballads, whether of the national type of *Agincourt* or *Chevy Chase*, or

of the more personal type of *King John* or the ever-
II. The historical type. green *Sir Patrick Spens*. For even if we admit, for argument's sake, that references like that to King James in *Chevy Chase* or touches like that of Squire Witherington fighting "upon his stumps" are later interpolations, we have yet to reckon with the general literary intention of these poems. The oftener one reads these admirable ballads the more difficult is it to destroy the impression that they were not produced in the heat and scurry of the events. Mingled with their feeling of the past is a feeling for the past, a sense of retrospect which yields pictorial possibilities to the later artist. Even in pieces whose subject is of the fifteenth century, that is strictly contemporary, we can recognise this attitude, just as (to complete the heresy) there is in their stir and naïveté a pretty suspicion of artfulness. Nor are such things strange, for the fifteenth-century spirit was neither naïve nor original, and could not be so till it had passed through a gross and cynical materialism. A great part of its higher enjoyment was in a sort of historical reverie, in the varied forms which range between *The Falls of Princes* and the *Dames du temps jadis*, and the ballad appropriately and naturally voiced something of this mood.

In the *Folio* there are perhaps four ballads dealing with national history which may date from the fifteenth century, though their oldest texts are not given in Percy's MS. *Chevy Chase*, for example, appears in an obviously later version, but the Ash-

molean copy, which was printed by Hearne in 1719, is in all probability the direct descendant of the *Hunttis of Cheuet*, or *Hunting of the Cheviot*, which is referred to in the *Complaynt of Scotlande* (1549), in the list of "sueit sangis" sung by the shepherds. It may therefore belong to the fifteenth century, though, all other evidence wanting, it would seem to describe the border-raids of the mid-sixteenth century such as we know them from Sadler and the State Papers. The *Folio* does not contain the counterpart, *The Battle of Otterbourne*,[1] in which Douglas is the forager and Percy the defender. If it is, as Professor Child assumes, the ballad of which Sidney spoke so memorably, it may be almost contemporary with Chevy Chase; but it shows more sadly the havoc of the "blind crowders." Agincourt was an old and popular subject, and the existence of the song *Deo gratias Anglia* and the verses ascribed to Lydgate, both of the fifteenth century, makes it probable that the *Agincourte Battell* of the *Folio* first saw the light in that century, though certainly not in its present form. *Durham feilde* may belong to the same time. *The Rose of Englande* may have been written about 1490; its subject and its allusions, to the Earl of Richmond among others, fix Bosworth Field as the anterior limit, otherwise its allegory of the tree "of a mickle price" in "a garden grene and gay" might have suggested an earlier origin.

Though Scotland was prolific of ballads in later times, it is remarkable that the evidence of early

[1] It appears in the *Reliques* (i. 37).

Scottish examples is so scanty. Beyond the possibility that the Scottish versions of the Otterburn and Chevy Chase poems are derived from earlier copies, and the presumption that the verse quoted in Hume of Godscroft on the death of the Lord of Liddesdale is a fragment of the old ballad on that subject, perhaps the oldest is the *Battle of Harlaw*, the "battel of the hayrlau" of the *Complaynt of Scotlande*, which was first printed, though obviously in amended form, in Ramsay's *Evergreen*. It cannot be older than the fifteenth century, for the battle was fought in 1411. The "grand old ballad" of *Sir Patrick Spens* has now been referred, from internal evidence, to a time not earlier than the reign of James VI.,[1] a comfortable compromise between the uncritical theory of its great antiquity and the equally absurd view of Robert Chambers, who classed it with the eighteenth-century forgeries. So, too, the ballad of *Auld Maitland*, first published by Sir Walter Scott from a copy supplied by the Ettrick Shepherd, is an impossible version of the story hinted at in Gavin Douglas's *Palice of Honour*,[2] and can hardly escape the suspicion of being a modern composition. On the romantic side the same conditions present themselves. The ballad of *Thomas of Erceldoune* may or may not be derived from the romance of that name of the early fifteenth century; but both are clearly offshoots from the older *Ogier le Danois*, and it would be difficult to hold that the ballad is

The Scottish ballads.

[1] See Henderson, *Vernacular Scottish Poetry*, p. 350.

[2] Ed. Small, i. 65.

an earlier poetic endeavour than the romances. The subsequent popularity of the ballad form in Scotland and its diminishing interest in England—if we take only the examples of any literary pretension—may perhaps be explained by the fact that Scotland, for reasons peculiar to herself, was not attracted as England was by the prose[1] and dramatic forms into which the Southern writers readily turned the old romantic material. The ballad supplied to some extent the lesser needs of Scottish literature. Prose was consecrated to the service of Church and State, and the dramatic instinct lived apologetically in the ballad-dialogues. This dialogue form, as shown for example in the passages between the Squire and 'Puella' in the English *Nut-Brown Maid*, becomes more and more frequent in the Scottish ballads.

Later popularity of the ballad in Scotland.

The oldest historical ballads of the more personal type in the *Folio* are more difficult to determine. The story of *Sir Aldingar* is a compound of materials of old date, but the English ballad and even its Norwegian analogues of *Ravengaard og Memcring* are later compositions, and cannot be older than the sixteenth century. Portions of it may have existed in song-form as the "Deu vous saue, dam Emme" referred to as a delvers' refrain in *Piers the Plowman*, though another allusion in

The personal type.

[1] Or like Chaucer's Host, who, sick of *Sir Thopas*, exclaimed—

"Lat see wher thou canst tellen aught in geste
Or tell in prose somewhat at the leste
In which ther be som mirthe or some doctryne."

—*Prologue to Melibeus.*

the same poem to "dame Emme" of "Shordyche" rather robs the prototype of the ballad-queen Eleanor of her virtue and gentility. *Glasgerion*, the great harper, on whom the smaller minstrels in Chaucer's *House of Fame* 'gaped' with admiration, well deserved some early professional attention, but the *Folio* version seems to be later than the fifteenth century. The verses on *Kinge John and Bishoppe* are on a subject which has been traced back to the fifteenth century,[1] but the *Folio* version is in the romance couplets. *Hereford and Norfolke*, which describes the feud between the earls at the close of the fourteenth century, bears the stamp of the seventeenth century, though earlier versions may well have existed; and the complicated ten-lined stanzas of *Edward III.*, which tell how the Countess of Salisbury made the naughty monarch mend his ways, may be a fifteenth-century rendering.

Outside both these romantic and historical groups, or perhaps more correctly intermediate between them, lies an interesting set of ballads, of which the *Robin Hood* cycle and *John de Reeve* are the most important examples. The Robin Hood ballads may be safely ascribed to the fifteenth century. The first mention of the outlaw, in *Piers the Plowman*, does not necessarily help us in dating the ballads, nor indeed do the references in Wyntoun and Paston prove anything beyond the vitality of the popular tradition; but the publication of Wynken de Worde's *Lytel Geste* (1490)—which is a conglomerate of the

The Robin Hood cycle.

[1] *Folio MS.*, ed. Hales and Furnivall, i. 508.

ballad episodes—fixes a posterior limit for the date of their composition. The appearance of such a *corpus* at this time, and the rapid evolution of the stories in the sixteenth century,[1] make it improbable that the literary interest was older than the previous century. The *Folio* begins with no less than seven Robin Hood ballads (*Concerning a Beggar and the Three Squires; The Butcher; Fryer Tucke; The Pindar of Wakefield; Quene Katherine; Little John*, &c.; and *Robin Hood's Death*), and includes a version of *Guy of Gisborne*, which deals with one of the Robin Hood adventures. Some of these are probably of later origin, though they may well be of the fifteenth century. The editors of the *Folio* record the fact that two other ballads, *Robin Hood and the Potter* and *Robin Hood and the Monk*, are found in MSS. which are not older than the oldest edition of the *Lytel Geste*.[2]

Their so-called popular character.

The seemingly 'popular' character of these ballads requires some explanation. Robin Hood has been prettily styled the King Arthur of the Commons. The metaphor may stand, if it points merely to a change in the *personnel* of romantic tradition and not to any real modification in the spirit of romantic story. The notion that there is such modification is quite untenable. For though Robin Hood is an outlaw, defying the sheriff and the king's foresters, a yeoman-

[1] Robin Hood is first characterised with any care in John Mair's *History* (1521).

[2] Ritson's collection is still the best for the Robin Hood cycle.

hero fond of the people's sport of archery, not a mounted Sir Robin, there is in the poems no emphasis of class-contrast and certainly no *bourgeois* spirit either in the idea or in the art. The yeoman was already, by Chaucer's courtesy, a literary respectability, and the only difference between the orderly fellow at the Tabard and his brother in Barnesdale is that the latter was a little more outspoken and energetic against crying abuses and tyrannies. Robin Hood is the champion of fair-play, who follows the good traditions of chivalry, and is untouched by the cynicism and the realism of the new democracy. Artistically considered, the cycle is the analogue rather than the counterpart of the knightly romance; and in its historical development — the elaboration of the adventures of his followers—it exactly corresponds with the older cycles.

With *John de Reeve* the case is somewhat different: and it may be taken as the exception which proves the rule. John is a 'villain,' and would have been a literary humbug had he been anything but a fifteenth-century radical. The ballad *motif* is the throwing together of the king and his courtiers and this plain-spoken man, and it is obviously intended to voice the sturdy independence which had been growing with the economic changes since the Black Death. The carle says—

John de Reeve.

"With gentlenesse I haue nothing to doe,"

and speaks rudely of the king; he revels in good feeding and drinks hard with Hodgkin and Hob, has a

rabid dislike of Latin "spoken amongst lewd men," and lays himself out for a good deal of tomfoolery and horse-play. And this sturdy fellow—"craibit John the Reif," as Gavin Douglas calls him—rides to court with "a pitch-fforke and a sword" and is made a knight! If we date the ballad as early as the middle of the century, it is a striking and unique example of the intrusion of the comic spirit amid the conventions of the romantic ballad. It has the additional interest of being written in the six-lined stanza, sacred to the older romance-poems, and to *Sir Thopas*.[1]

The Popular Songs.

For the popular songs of fifteenth-century England we have a fairly adequate record in the MSS. edited by Wright, Halliwell, and Fuller-Maitland (*ante*, p. 190, note). The manuscripts of these song-books seem to have been the working-copies of certain minstrels who lived

[1] The similarity of the subject of *John de Reeve* with that of the alliterative romance-poem *Rauf Coilȝear* (*supra*, p. 74) and their frequent association in contemporary popularity (see Dunbar and Gavin Douglas) may supply a further presumption as to the fifteenth-century origin of the former. It may also be noted that all the extant pieces founded on the real or fictitious wanderings of our kings in disguise, like the Sultans of Bagdad,—as *King Henry VIII. and the Cobbler*, *The King and the Miller of Mansfield*, or the stories of the Gudeman of Ballangeich,—cannot be older than the fifteenth or sixteenth centuries. The later pieces have lost much of the naïveté of the old dialogue; and there is indication of a change in the public attitude to them towards the beginning of the seventeenth century. The notorious Deloney was in 1596 threatened with the Lord Mayor's vengeance, "for bringing in the Queen speaking with her people dialogue-wise; in very fond and undecent sort."

in that century. The contents are anonymous. Some of the poems may not be in their original form, but there is a strong presumption that the majority when written down were, as happens in the albums of our own day, comparatively recent. Some are very poor in literary execution, and may have owed their place in the repertory to their music rather than to their words; some may have been 'gagged' and debased by the crowders. In kind, however, they differ in no sense from the verse-practice of the century; their separation from that material is due to the accidents that they are anonymous and that they had gained the ear of the populace. Thus, if we take the set of seventy-six songs and carols published by the Percy Society, we find that they fall into the familiar groups. There is a large number of religious pieces, chiefly carols, in English and in Latin, of which the most meritorious examples are probably the poem beginning—

Their varieties.

"Thys endris nyȝth
I saw a syȝth
A stare as bryȝt as day;
And ever among
A mayden song
Lullay, by by, lullay" (No. x.),

and No. lxxv., entitled "Tyrle, tyrle, so merylye the shepperdes began to blowe." Others are didactic (*e.g.*, "Man, be war, the way ys sleder"), frequently reminding us of Dunbar in the dumps; or, like the Scots poet again, harassed by the *Timor mortis* (No. lii.);

or in the satirical mood of *London Lickpenny* (No. xxx.); or, Golias-like, drowning sorrow,

> "Bonum vinum cum sapore
> Bybit abbas cum priore;
> Sed conventus de pejore
> Semper solet bibere";

or, in at least eight pieces, naughtily severe on shrews and troublesome queans; or giving riddles[1] or "good medycyn for sor eyen." In the companion collection (MSS. Sloane, No. 2593 B.M.), which has some pieces in common, there is a large proportion of religious verses, including the very popular "Mary moder, meke and mylde," and the charming verses beginning "I syng of a mayden." The repetition in the latter of the phrase "as dew in Aprylle," and other delicate touches, give the poem a poetic lineage explicable by no 'popular' theory. In the other contributions we have the familiar subjects,—"Peny is a hardy knyȝt," and the impossible She, concerning whom one song proclaims—

> "ȝyng men, I warne ȝou everychon
> . . . . . .
> Che takyt a staf and brekit my hed."

The extracts from the Porkington MS., printed by the Warton Club, are also a medley of hymns, moral verses on the vanity of things (including the most complete version of *Earth upon Earth*), and variants of Mapes's jolly songs. The Trinity College (Cam-

[1] *Ante*, p. 174, note.

bridge) MS., printed by Mr Fuller-Maitland, is almost entirely devoted to Christmas Carols, but it contains the Agincourt song, "Our Kyng went forth to Normandy," an "Eya martir Stephane," and a short verse-homily with the refrain "Abyde, I hope it be the beste." The chief interest, however, of this MS. lies in the quaint music which accompanies the verses.

The political songs.

We need not linger over the so-called *Political Poems and Songs*, which Mr Thomas Wright has edited for the Rolls Series. They cannot in any sense be called 'popular.' One on the Siege of Calais, written in 1436, shows some approximation to the ballad style; but the prevailing tone is 'literary,' a strange mixture of dialectic, invective, latinity, and rhetorical ingenuity. Pieces like the *Libel of English Policy* belong more properly to the category of didactic verse. The favourite theme is the political and social unrest of the times—"On the Times," "On the Popular Discontent at the Disaster in France" (1449), "On the Corruptions of the Times" (1456) when

> "Fulfyllyd ys the profesy for ay
> That Merlyn sayd, and many on mo,
> Wysdam ys wel ny away,
> No man may knowe hys frend fro foo"—

and always in the mood of songless melancholy of the Lydgates and Occleves.

There are no corresponding collections of Scottish popular songs of the century. Our scanty knowledge of them is derived from three quarters: first, from the literary collections of Bannatyne and others, in which

we are justified in assuming that some are imbedded; secondly, from the list of mere titles preserved in the *Complaynt of Scotlande* (1549) and kindred passages; and thirdly, in the parodies of the *Compendious Buik of Gude and Godlie Ballatis* (1567). "Stil under the leyvis grene" in the Maitland MS. (*ante*, p. 72), and "O lusty maye, with Flora quene" in the Bannatyne, both of which are named in the *Complaynt*, are possibly old. The latter, which has been erroneously ascribed to Alexander Scot, might be by any one of the Scottish Chaucerians. It is certainly too 'aureate' for popular verse; but the music, which is still preserved, may have given it a wider vogue. Others named in the *Complaynt*, such as "Allone i veip in grit distres," "Rycht soirly musing in my mynde," "O myne hart, hay, this is my sang," "Greuit is my sorrou," "Allace that samyn sueit face," are extant in the travesties in the *Gude and Godlie Ballatis*, in which we also find a parody of the fifteenth-century song "Now the day dawis," alluded to by Dunbar and Douglas. Some in the list in the *Complaynt of Scotlande* are English in origin, such as Henry VIII.'s "Pastance vitht gude companye," and the above-named "Greuit is my sorrou." The latter may reach back to the fifteenth century, through the *Dying Maiden's Complaint*. But chronology is here a very difficult matter, and the subdivision of the list in the *Complaynt* into songs and dance-tunes is not very helpful. The names of some of the airs—"The Speyde," "The Flail," "Cum kyttil me naykyt

The Scottish popular songs.

wantounly"—resemble the quaint tune-names of the later Meistersingers of the fifteenth century; and another "The dede dance," otherwise known later as "The Shaking of the Sheet," might well belong to the close of that period. If, therefore, we exclude the lyrical pieces which are the attested work of the better known Makaris, and the songs of English origin, there remain but the merest fragments of anonymous popular Scots poetry, which can be referred to the fifteenth century—a record for that time quite disproportionate to the Alexander, Berwick, and Bannockburn stanzas, which a generous criticism allows to the thirteenth and early fourteenth centuries.

The French Chansons.

When we turn to France we find some interesting points of likeness and difference between her popular poetry and that of England. Several collections are at the service of students, but ample material is afforded by the *Recueil de chants historiques* by Leroux de Lincy, the *Chansons normandes du quinzième siècle* by A. Gasté, and, above all, the delightful volume of *Chansons du XV^e^ siècle* which M. Gaston Paris has edited for the "Société des anciens textes français."[1] The greater number[2] of these pieces is popular in the sense of being antagonistic to the rhetorical tendencies of the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries, as well against the later lyrical style which had fallen into the artificialities of the

[1] Paris, 1875. M. Auguste Gevaert deals in the same volume with the music of the songs.

[2] Chastellain's 'ballads' in favour of Charles the Bold cannot, of course, be anything but rhetorical; and even his humbler opponent, Gilles des Ormes, hardly uses a plain style in his praises of Louis XI.

ballade, the rondel, and other metrical niceties, as against the general mood of Cretinism which was depressing French literary art to mere pedantries. They represent a reversion to, or rather a survival of, the lyrical conditions which preceded the thirteenth century. In that period the main forms were *romances* and *pastourelles*, of native growth and development; the spirit was trouvère, as yet untouched by the artistry of the troubadours. They are the poetical flower of the early Middle Ages, simple, direct, dramatic rather than analytic; and they are, by appropriate accident, anonymous. Thereafter it is a struggle against the foreign influence of the South, with the result that for at least two centuries, *i.e.*, towards the end of the fourteenth century, French song and popular verse generally are imitative of the art of Provence. For though the *pastourelle* still holds its own, it has the companionship of the *sirventois*, the *complainte*, the *aubade*, the *chanson d'amour* and others, and there are hints of the coming of the *ballade* and *rondeau*. The literary character of the change is emphasised by the fact that the names of the authors are put on record, such as Thibaut of Champagne, the chief of the singers, and Rutebeuf, who wrote satirical and historical pieces of contemporary interest. By the fifteenth century the artificial forms are fully established, and all lyrical verse from the best of Villon and Orléans to the humblest attempts of the lesser fry is cast in the mould of the *ballade*, *rondeau*, or the like. The *chansons* in the MS. edited by M.

Of their antagonism to prevailing styles in France.

Gaston Paris stand out in strong contrast with this fifteenth-century formalism and even with the *Livre des Cent Ballades* of the end of the previous century, which, despite the circumstances of its composition, is entirely lacking in lyrical spontaneity; and in some contrast, too, with the fifteenth-century patriotic songs (as in M. Leroux de Lincy's collection)[1] which are in the more elaborate stanzaic forms. Nevertheless, the difference is not that between the unrestrained fancy of folk-story or popular song and the uninspired work of chamber-poets. M. Gaston Paris's metaphor of the one as the clear spring rising on the hillside, and the other as the artificial waterworks of the formal garden, may be critically misleading. It is just, so far as it suggests that the *chansons* preserve some of the pastoral quality which is utterly lost in the urban and academic manner of the century. On the other hand, it is misleading in so far that it denies to them any serious claim to 'literary' quality. To characterise these songs as "la plus riche éclosion de la poésie populaire" will probably be more correctly interpreted by the French reader than by the English, to whom a popular outburst in literature is inevitably associated with a pleasing disregard of the devices of style. We have but to glance at the contents of the volume of the *Chansons* to see how far removed each item is from the unadorned manner of folk-song,—even in the song (No. vii.) which is tagged with the line "Soaz, soaz, ordonarequin," the oldest known specimen of the Basque language, or in one

Yet 'literary' in quality.

[1] I. 279-404.

pleasing example (No. cxxxvi.) of what we now call 'child's verses.' And the supremely beautiful lines, perhaps the best in the collection—

> "En baisant m'amye j'ai cuilly la fleur.
> M'amye est tant belle, si bonne façon,
> Blanche comme neige, droite comme ung jon.
> Et en baisant m'amye j'ay cuilly la fleur;" &c.—

which a mere crowder neither made nor marred, is typical, in style if not in excellence, of the whole round of French *chansons*. In the English ballads and songs we may find some excuse for suspecting the rougher hand in their formation and transmission, but in the French we are always reminded of the artistic purpose, such as set Charles d'Orléans and his companions to ring the changes on the lines—

> "Mais bien je voy
> Que suis auprès de la fontainne
> Et meurs de soy,"

for the amusement of themselves and their contemporaries.[1]

The main subjects.

The ballad and song literature of fifteenth-century France treats mainly of two themes, love and the national misfortunes, which, roughly speaking, correspond with the romantic and historical divisions of English popular verse. The French historical poems differ however from those of the *Otterbourne* type, in that they all deal with quite

[1] This is obvious even in popular satires like the 'ballad' of the *Anes volants*, which ridicules the corrupt and low-class agents of Louis XI.

recent events, and are in intention 'complaints' or calls to patriotism rather than mere tales in which the author finds his opportunity for description, and perhaps incidentally for contemporary application. In M. Gaston Paris's volume there are poems on the taking of St Omer, on the wars of Louis XII. against Maximilian, on the Italian campaigns; and in M. Leroux de Lincy's collection (where not a few are the recognised work of the authors described in a previous chapter) the subjects are the English invasion, the War of the Public Good, or the rivalry of Louis XI. and Charles the Bold, as chronicled in the puffs and counter-puffs of the French Gilles des Ormes and the Burgundian Georges Chastellain. The love poems in these collections are of great variety, in treatment, in form, and in origin. Thus in the *Chansons* there are pastoral dialogues, elegies, petitions, satires on woman's caprice,[1] in the form of the *chanson d'amour*, the *pastourelle*, and other varieties, and in the dialects of France, Normandy, Picardy, Burgundy, Savoy, Gascony, and even of Spain. Outside these the more noteworthy types are the drinking songs and the *Noëls*. With the former is associated

Olivier Basselin.

that very uncertain author Olivier Basselin or Bachelin, the fuller of Vaux de Vire, who disputes with the sixteenth-century Jean le Houx, an advocate of the same place, the honour of defining bacchanalian literature in the *vaux-de-vire*. Round this question of rivalry has grown up a number

[1] Cf. the cynical "Lourdault, lourdault, lourdault, garde que tu feras," *Chansons*, ed. G. Paris, p. 71.

of others which have vexed French critics exceedingly, such as, whether Olivier or Jean are also the creators of the *vaudeville*, on the assumption that that form is derived from the *vaux-de-vire*, or whether the type of song is not older than either, or whether it is a 'popular' or a 'literary' growth. The historical identity of the *vaux-de-vire* and the *vaudeville* has been a pet idea since the days of Ménage, and has obtained modern support from certain philologers who see in the words but the familiar interchange of *l* and *r*; yet it is difficult, in the light of recent research, to accept any other view than that the 'voix-de-ville' (otherwise, vau-de-ville or val-de-ville) and the *vaux-de-vire* are of different origin, and that the former may even precede the specific drinking-verse of Basselin or Le Houx.[1] With regard to the second disputed point, we may assume, without reference to easily accessible examples, that bacchanal verse was not the discovery of the fifteenth century; though this does not invalidate the claim of Basselin or his 'editor' Le Houx to have given the vogue to a special variety, any more than this claim will minimise the importance of Adam Billaud in the seventeenth century as the real definer of the art of the *chanson à boire*. As to the 'popular' or 'literary' quality of these verses there need be no quarrel, for the stanzaic forms, not to speak of the Latin lines and phrases interwoven, cannot be explained by any theory of spontaneous generation of the ballad or song. Such *chansons* more than others demand the literary artist, and though we

[1] The evidence is discussed in M. Tiersot's *Histoire de la chanson populaire*, Paris, 1889, pt. i. ch. x.

may not be able to name the monkish wits who set the first models, we may think of them as we do of Mapes, or Billaud, or Tom D'Urfey, and conclude that in the fifteenth century there were some people, among them a certain fuller of Vire, who tipped the can to a new tune.[1]

So too with the *Noëls* or Christmas Carols. Many of these are extant in fifteenth-century MSS. in France, just as in England, but it is not till the sixteenth century that the form reaches its fullest vogue, partly by the aid of the printing-press, which circulated *Noelz nouveaulx* and *Bibles des Noëls* throughout the provinces, and even across the frontiers. These poems are exclusively literary in character, the work of clerks or recognised poets, often written to old airs, and sometimes composed with special music for the picturesque ceremonial of Christmastide. To a great extent they anticipate the spirit which stimulated the Reformers to turn the popular and often obscene songs into good and godly ballads. They are all of a kind, like the version of the drinking song, "Quand la mer Rouge apparut," quoted by M. Tiersot,[2] or the following—

The Noëls.

"Voici la nouvelle
Que Jésus est né,
Que d'une Pucelle
Il nous est . . . tourlourirette,
Il nous est . . . lonlanderirette,
Il nous est donné."[3]

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[1] One of Basselin's pieces, on the English, appears in M. Gaston Paris's *Chansons*, p. 66.

[2] Chap. xi. p. 257.

[3] *Ibid.*, p. 256.

The general impression obtained from a survey of the period is (1) that, as in England, there was an active production of short pieces of the song or ballad type, but that the French were more exclusively lyrical, satirical, and contemporary; and (2) that there is even more emphatic evidence in France of the late literary origin of that literature. The historical or antiquarian sense had not been developed as in England. Nor is there any evidence of the treatment of the older romances in a popular style. The nearest approximation is found in the twelfth century *lais* of Marie de France and the more lyrical *lais* of the trouvères of the two centuries which followed, though these belong really to the history of the fabliau and its offshoots. The only traditional material is of the kind preserved in the *Robin et Marion* and *Perronnelle* songs of M. Gaston Paris's volume. Like Robin Hood in England, *Robin et Marion* is the subject of a large cycle of national lyrics. It grew by an analogous kind of gemmation (if I may use the term), only whereas in the English story the vitality showed itself characteristically in the elaboration of episode, in the French it is rather in the variety of phases of the lovers' passion. Yet even here we must suspect the hand of some forgotten poet. The later versions are obviously inspired by Adam de la Halle, and he, there is reason to believe, played but the Jean le Houx or Basselin to some earlier pastoralist of the thirteenth century.[1] *Robin et Marion* and *Perronnelle* represent

General conclusions from the French evidence.

[1] Cf. the *pastourelle* in Bartsch, *Rom.* III. ii.

therefore the poor French counterpart of the English treatment of the old romance material. The interest of the matter is that in both cases it was in the fifteenth century that this literary method was seriously inaugurated and preparation made for the popular energies of the sixteenth and later centuries.

Italian popular song.

In Italy, too, the fifteenth century is remarkably prolific in popular song.[1] The limitation of range of subject, which constitutes the main contrast between the French and English examples, is even more contracted. The great majority of the Italian 'ballads' are love-ballads: history and romance are seldom the subject of the song-writer, be he Politian, or Il Burchiello, or the merest *cantore di piazza*. There are, it is true, a considerable number of *Lamenti*, *Pianti*, and *Storie* which treat with contemporary directness of the national misfortunes, but they date rather from the last decade of the century onwards. There is nothing to correspond to the fourteenth-century political verse of Antonio Pucci, unless it be the work of the barber Il Burchiello.[2] Such characteristic pieces as *El Lamento e la Discordia de Italia universale* or pieces like the later *La Presa di Roma* hardly fall under the category of ballad-history as we understand it in the Percy *Folio* or even in the *chants historiques* of France. The romantic element is still less

Absence of the historical and romantic elements.

[1] See Rubieri, *Storia della poesia popolare italiana*, 1877; D'Ancona, *La Poesia popolare italiana*, 1878; Symonds, *Renaissance in Italy*, vol. iv.

[2] See chap. iv.

obvious. I have already referred, when speaking of the late development of the romantic epic, to the lack of this ingredient in the national character. This is even more marked in the popular songs, by the absence of all suspicion of the 'Gothic' nightmare of uncanny and unearthly things, or even of later legend. Mr Symonds has pointed out that the only Italian 'ballads' which incline to the romantic belong to the North-Western dialects, just where contact with transalpine ideas was most easy, and, if I may supplement his thesis, where the racial conditions implied, in Lombardy at least, some sympathy with Teutonic methods. The influence was limited, and only in one case did it extend as far south as Tuscany.[1]

The main theme.

The main theme is love, which is treated with Southern facility, in an unending variety of phase from the wildest ecstasy to the deepest gloom. Under this head may be included both the secular and religious poems, for the latter are essentially emotional, and lack the intellectual piety of the verse of Northern nations. The fifteenth-century Italian praises the Virgin as he would his mistress, and sorrows for his sins or the woes of his countrymen in the mood of a disappointed and heartsick lover. Some of the religious pieces, besides, show a closer literary relationship to the *ballate*, in that they are but 'good and godly' versions of the love-songs, and are written to the same airs. The secular songs fall into

[1] See Symonds, *Renaissance*, iv. 238, for an interesting account of *L'Avvelenato*, an Italian variant of the Scottish *Lord Randal*.

two grand divisions—on the one hand the *ballate*, and on the other the varied forms of *rispetti*, *stornelli*, &c., which preserve more of the genuine idyllic or pastoral flavour of Italian life. The religious pieces are more often *laudi* or passionate hymns and invocations, for the most part severely mystical in tone, but sometimes satirical.

The formal varieties.

All varieties occur in large numbers in the fifteenth century, but they are not, as I have stated in regard to the English ballads, the peculiar possession of that century. Yet they have this in common with the English and French, that they illustrate in an unmistakable way the literary character of their development. Thus many of the more favoured *ballate* are the recognised work of the fourteenth-century masters—Dante, Boccaccio, Sachetti, and others—though they have suffered some transformation in becoming hackneyed, and, contrary to general experience, have often been improved in the process.[1] The Lauds naturally arose from the religious fervours of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries. They reached their highest point of literary art, as well as of almost breathless intensity, in the *Cantici* of Jacopone da Todi, and they became thereafter, on Jacopone's model, a recognised poetical form for all grades of poetic ability. In the fifteenth century especially, when they are so plentiful, they are, in almost every case, the work of learned writers. As a result they lose much of the *vis* of Jacopone's lauds and not a little of his literary spontaneity, though they do not

Their 'literary' characteristics.

[1] Symonds, iv. 226.

lose, even with Lorenzo or Politian, much of the intensity, we might say the sincerity, of the erotic piety, which racial and social conditions imposed on the Italian of the Transition. There is reason to believe that many of the *rispetti* and *stornelli* were written for the people at a very early date, perhaps two or three centuries before our period. In these, if in any, we should look for the 'folk' elements. The assumption, founded on a few isolated facts, that these pieces must have been widely distributed throughout Italy, is however no evidence against a comparatively late derivation from a single source, but rather in favour of it, if we call to mind the analogy of the passage of Dante's *ballate* into popular vogue. And just as some of these *ballate* are even now to be heard, in somewhat changed form, among the 'contadini,' so likewise may the work of certain early poets, as yet undetermined or unidentified, have lived on in the *rispetti* of the fifteenth century. The permanence of popular song-tradition in modern Italy and its wide diffusion as far back as the fifteenth century proves nothing more than the strong memory of a conservative people. Our doubts are strengthened too by the fact, already referred to, that early Italian literature lacks the historical or legendary elements. Stories, whether of wizards or paladins, have a stronger staying power, as literary material, in popular tradition, than sighs and sparkling eyes and love ecstasies, perennially interesting though these are. Be this as it may, it is chiefly through a cultured medium that we approach the body of popular song

Consideration of the rispetti and stornelli.

in the fifteenth century.[1] We have already seen how Humanism was ultimately interested in the idyllic. It is clear that however rustic or literary may have been the origin of these popular poems, they remain to us stamped with the individual and artistic qualities of Politian and his academic contemporaries.

The Spanish ballads.

Of Spanish ballad literature, perhaps the richest both in extent and in quality, there is no manuscript evidence of earlier date than the fifteenth century. In other words, it is not till the age of Santillana, when courtly, Italianate, and antiquarian manners were in the ascendant, that we find the first records of popular verse; just as in England and elsewhere, hardly preceding the invention of the printing-press. None are preserved in the miscellaneous *Cancioneros* of the reign of Juan II., and even in the great *Romancero General* there are but a few which are older than Columbus.

The term romanz.

The word 'ballad' is only a handy English equivalent for 'romance,' which has with us another signification. 'Romance (romanz)' was in the earliest stages of all Romance or Romanic literatures applied to the vernacular language in contrast with the Latin, but later, probably about the thirteenth century, it was restricted in Spanish usage to shorter narrative or epical pieces of the character of the earlier *cantar*—to those pieces, in fact, which are the analogues of our historical ballads. Later it was also applied to any short song or lyrical poem.

[1] *Supra*, chap. iv.

The *romancero* was thus nominally a book of 'romances,' either miscellaneous or cyclic; but the earlier collections, having been made at a time when the term included lyrical compositions, are in reality *cancioneros*. Indeed, this is true of most of the anthologies, in which the 'romances,' when they do occur, are sicklied over with the mannerisms of the sixteenth and seventeenth centuries. It is not till 1550 that we find any real approximation to a Book of Ballads, in the *Silva de Romances* of Esteban de Nájera. The main facts therefore are, that there is no literary evidence of ballads in Spain anterior to the fifteenth century, and that such evidence is derived almost entirely from the stray sheets of the first printing-presses, and not from popular collections. This synchronism with the English ballads and a certain similarity in their subjects (though the English are on a smaller historical and heroic scale) and to some extent in their metrical construction—the normal Spanish measure being octosyllabic lines with assonance of the even lines, either in couplets or intertwined throughout—tempt us to inquire whether there is any parallelism in the evolution of English and Spanish popular verse.

The literary evidence of ballads before the fifteenth century.

There is a strong presumption that there was in the early stages of Castilian literature a considerable *corpus* of heroic verse of the *chanson de geste* type. Beyond this point we need not go, for the *cantilenas* or songs from which they were supposed to be derived by accretion are mere critical figments, unsupported by any suspicion of evidence, and, as an historical

explanation, rather contrary to the obvious facts in the early development of all national epics.[1] These *chansons de geste* or *cantares de gesta* are hinted at in the thirteenth century by Alfonso the Wise, who speaks of them being sung by the *juglares* (*jongleurs*). There is no reason to imagine that the conditions were unlike those in France, and the inference is strengthened by the correspondence of the names and by the fact that assonance, which became ultimately the idiosyncrasy of Spanish verse, was also used in the French *chansons de geste*. In this category of *cantares* we may place the Spanish Rolandiad, the *Poema del Cid*, extant in a MS. of the fourteenth century and probably as old as the twelfth, and the other national "matters" of the Infantes of Lara, Bernardo de Carpio, Fernán González, and the like. In these, and especially in the poem of the Cid, the uniformity of *motif* and individuality of treatment are a direct argument against the view that they are originally a glomeration of separate poems. It seems more reasonable to assume that such poems were the original quarries, from which later work was constructed, and that the process of this transformation of the *cantar* was, as elsewhere, of a double kind, through the prose chronicle and through the 'romance' or ballad. The consideration of the first of these belongs to another chapter, but the fact that

The early cantares de gesta.

[1] The pros and cons of the dispute about the *cantilenas* and the so-called lyrico-epical theory are accessible in Signor Rajna's *Origini dell' epopea francese*, Florence, 1884 (chap. xvii.), and in M. Gaston Paris's critique of that work in *Romania*, 1884, p. 616 *et seq.*

in the fifteenth, sixteenth, and seventeenth centuries 'romances' were founded on them may be taken as supplementary evidence of the lateness rather than of the earliness of the ballad as a *genre*. An intermediate phase between the full-bodied *Cantar*, or *Poem*, of the Cid and the later and better known 'romances' is found in the anonymous *cantar* of the thirteenth century called the *Crónica Rimada*,[1] from which these later ballads of the Cid were to a large extent derived. There the separation into units of episode and adventure is strongly suggested, and the verse of sixteen syllables is just the ballad-verse 'written out.' Like evidence is afforded by another rhymed chronicle, by Rodrigo Yañez, a belated *cantar* of the fourteenth century, in which the octosyllabic lines have usurped the place of the older measure.

The evolution of the Spanish ballad.

The inference therefore is that the ballads rose out of the débris of the old *cantar*, and the evidence points to the fifteenth century as the probable time of their true development. Some of the romances in the *Silva*, referred to above, may be as old as Yañez's poem, but the first authenticated examples are to be found in Lope de Stúñiga's *Cancionero*,[2] and these are the known work of the poet Carvajal.

The problem of the rise of the ballad in Spain is complicated by two considerations — first, that the influence of the native *juglares*, who soon sank to the

[1] Otherwise the *Cantar Rodrigo*. See Mr Fitzmaurice-Kelly's *Spanish Literature*, p. 52.

[2] *Ante*, p. 152.

level of the English crowders or the Italian *cieci* but played a more important part than their foreign brethren in the spreading of the literary material, is very intricate and difficult to determine; and, secondly, that the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries were also the period of the infusion of the foreign romances of chivalry, when, for a time at least, a reactionary tendency set in in favour of greater length and more sustained effort. Nevertheless, the process was in the main one of disintegration, a selection of portions of the older stuff; and the similarity of all the older ballads in spirit and technique, as well as in subject, implies, as elsewhere, something of the *pastiche* in the workmanship, as well as of the interference of the individual poet of a later age. Lockhart's "Ancient Spanish" Ballads have been traced to the originals not older than the early fifteenth century; but, even had we lacked such knowledge, it would have been outside conviction that these were ballads which the Cid himself might have heard.[1]

Difficulties.

General conclusion.

The tradition of German criticism regarding the songs and ballads of the Teutonic nations is to consider them as the common product of the national life, not necessarily of ancient times, but certainly of the fourteenth, fifteenth, and sixteenth centuries, when the new popular principles were seeking expression in

[1] What is true of the Spanish ballads would appear to be as true of the Portuguese. For the material, see Hardung's *Romanceiro Portuguez*, 2 vols., Leipzig, 1877; and Bellerman's *Portugiesische Volkslieder und Romanzen*, Leipzig, 1864.

German society, as elsewhere. Herder formulated this view in his *Von deutscher Art und Kunst* (1773), and Arnim and Brentano elaborated it in their *Des Knaben Wunderhorn* (1805), just as Tieck, two years earlier, had given a like explanation of the *Minnelieder*. This is really an aggravated form of the 'prehistoric' argument, an application to comparatively modern times of a theory whose feasibility, such as it is, lies in the uncertain conditions of a very remote past.

Germany.

This view is to a great extent the natural result of overstating the differences between the literary lyric —the Minnesong and Meistersong—and the *Volkslieder*.[1] The distinction is not really one of *genre* or of origin, but only of adaptation, condition, and degree —the contrast of sub-varieties, determined by the antithesis of gentle and simple, literary affectation and directness of expression, and the like. There are several considerations which preclude the possibility of any serious gulf between the two forms. In the first place, the *Volkslieder* are strongly 'literary' in quality. This is perhaps gainsaying the opinion of the German enthusiasts who, like our own critics since Addison's day, have found the true merit of the ballads in their defiance of the conventions of romantic and lyrical art. Even in the earlier phase of the songs of the Vagrants of the twelfth century the Latin tags in the verses, the bacchanalian wit, and the gnomic

The Volkslieder.

[1] The term *Volkslied* seems to have been first used by Herder, in the above-named book (p. 27).

and symbolic style belie the origin of the popular verse. They are, as it were, a variety of literary exercise outside the professional and exclusive Minnesong, a kind which might well have been written by some feebler Minnesinger, or composed for the less exacting requirements of the lower classes, or borrowed from some singer by the people and transformed to their liking. They may be, as Liliencron[1] and others have it, like the stones which are carried down stream and made smooth and rounded by the rush of the waters; but it seems just to remark that not only are such pebbles as 'unnatural' as the squared blocks of the craftsman, but that their presence is as *accidental* to the waters in which they are found as is the masonry which spans them. So too, later, the contrast between the Meistersong and the prolific work of the Bänkelsänger is a distinction of circumstance rather than of *genre*, and with even more obviousness than in the earlier stages. The individual quality of the later *Volkslieder*, which is to some their chief merit, can hardly be explained by the theory that these songs are a spontaneous national product. They must be either the direct work, or the echoes of the direct work, of individual poets, who, if their names were but known, would rank with the best of the lyrists; or, the so-called individualism of the songs must be a little less individual than has been presumed. I confess I incline to the latter view, for whatever the poems gain at first perusal on the side

Their so-called "individual quality."

[1] *Die historischen Volkslieder der Deutschen*, Leipzig, 1865-69.

of artistic directness by their use of the first personal pronoun or other specific details of the kind, as in

"Ich hort ein sichellin rauschen,"

they ultimately lose, when one finds how absolutely the manner is stereotyped. Such things at once suggest the 'literary' intention or trick, and belong to the category of affectations, such as distinguish the popular verse of England and France.

The relation to the knightly and Gild poetry.

The second difficulty in the separation of the *Volkslieder* as a *genre* from the songs of the Knights and Gilds, is that their interaction is too close and complete. The early *Volkslied* supplied, as we know, a new stimulus to the Minnesong of the later part of the twelfth century. In the thirteenth it was affected by the style of the successors of Walther von der Vogelweide, and notably of Neidhart von Reuenthal. It is not hard to see that in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries the nameless authors repeat the subjects and forms of the Masters. Great as was the cleavage between the two at the dawn of the German Renaissance, it was less a contrariety in technique and even in literary spirit than in social conditions. It could not well be otherwise, for the songs both of the later Masters and of the Bänkelsänger were the expression of one and the same idea —the *bourgeois*, in all its varieties. The only difference is in the extent of the diffusion and popularity of each. Though this be admitted, it were risky criticism to find in the greater number of the songs and ballads of the people any proof either of a general

literary power or of a strong literary tradition. *Rule Britannia* and *Home Sweet Home* are not less the work of individual writers (whose names might have been forgotten) because every plain man claims them as his own and bequeaths them with his chattels to his children.

The appearance in Germany before the fifteenth century of ballads, or of poems akin to the ballad, is rare and spasmodic. Wolfram von Eschenbach had composed four *Tagelieder* of a doubtful ballad type on the model of the older Provençal watch-songs, and in his *Titurel* had described the story of the love of Sigune for Schionatulander, in what has been called, rather fancifully, a ballad-metre. And Steimar, the Minnesinger of Thurgau, at the end of the thirteenth century, had treated peasant themes in the style of the *Tagelied*. By the middle of the fourteenth century short ballads on heroic subjects begin to appear. At this stage the epic, if not yet quite dead, is rapidly dying; and these ballads, as well as the shorter recensions of the older epics—the German equivalent of the English 'romance-poem,'—appear therefore at the time at which we should expect them. The *Nibelungenlied* is in the fifteenth century reduced to more popular form, and, in one manuscript, is a mere epitome of the adventures, with which is incorporated a rougher poem on Siegfried's early life. In the Dresden *Heldenbuch* of 1472 the *Ortnit* and *Wolfdietrich* poems are given in short versions, and the *Laurin* appears in stanzaic form for the first time; but the language is often rude, and, as in the English

The disintegration of the epic.

ballads, is distorted for the sake of filling up the line or helping the rhyme.[1] Further, this is the very time of the full development of the historical songs and ballads. In Liliencron's collection there are only five which refer to events in the second half of the thirteenth century, about forty to the fourteenth century (the majority after 1340), while in the fifteenth century the number runs to over one hundred and eighty.[2] This numerical comparison has its value, and perhaps more than its apparent value, even if we consider that many of the pieces need not be nearly contemporary with their subjects. Inadequate as the German evidence is compared with the English, it at least offers no contradiction to the general terms of the thesis of this chapter, and it emboldens us to conclude that in Germany, as in the rest of Europe, the popular ballad was a literary offshoot of the older epical and romantic matters, and that its rise and establishment as a literary *genre* date subsequently to the decay of the parent forms.

The historical idea.

It would appear that the available evidence, both historical and critical, is against the possibility of the epic and the romance being resultants of certain combinations of ballads, or that the ballad, as we know it, is the direct descendant of earlier hypothetical forms.

[1] See Paul's *Grundriss der germanischen Philologie*, II. i. 367. The same volume contains a full bibliography of German Ballads and Popular Songs. See also the table in Liliencron's *Deutsches Leben im Volkslied um 1530*, in Kürschner's *Deutsche National-Litteratur*.

[2] In the first half of the sixteenth century there are over four hundred.

There is, in the first place, an absolute æsthetic difference between the ballads proper and the epic, whether in its full-blown style or in those shorter episodical forms of the older Northern literature which some have considered to be the makings of the larger works.

Conclusions.

The ballad is not only inferior in what may be called the measure of its subject, but it is also restricted to matters of a humbler and less weighty interest. In the so-called 'epical ballads' shortness is often but the abridgment, more or less studied, of a complete epical *motif*: the subject is always of a higher order, and the style never lacks that quality of pretence and literary consciousness, that 'courtliness' we might say, which characterises the more sustained epopee. In the second place, the assumption runs contrary to the evidence of the development of all young literatures. The professional and dignified purpose comes first in the literary process: there is no opportunity in the early stages for the 'popular' Muse, as she appears in the ballads. This consideration, together with the testimony of actual results in the foregoing pages, appears to me to dispose of that other and more comfortable theory, which, laying no stress on a connection with epic or romance, represents the later ballads as the unliterary representatives of the work of prehistoric crowders. And again, even if we admit the general proposition for the sake of argument, it is clear that the earlier 'ballads' must have disappeared before the rising tide of epic and romance, just as a lower form succumbs to a higher, either as an individual or as a contributor

to that higher form, and it would be difficult to explain the sudden reversion or revival of the lower form as illustrated in the material of this chapter. I should be inclined to hold that the præ-epical 'ballad'—if we had proof of its existence—was itself the outcome and dissipation of a yet earlier epical conception. The historical relationship of the forms is conditioned by the difference in their æsthetic range and purpose. And, thirdly, the active beginnings of ballad-literature in or about the Transition, its simultaneous vogue in those countries in which the art of Romance had reached an approximately uniform stage of decay, and the spiritual and formal analogies between it and other literary efforts of the mediæval decline, give at least circumstantial support to the thesis of a later origin. The existence of earlier examples in the Scandian literatures—if indeed these may be accepted as belonging to the category under discussion—does not invalidate the position. In the Old North poetry had waxed and grown feeble some centuries earlier than in the South and West. Yet the life-histories of both are in parallel; and it is not as a mere coincidence that a like fate befalls the Sagas and transforms them into the *Rímur* and even into the ballads of the Faroese. And if there is any one who yet scoffs at the theory that the ballad activity in Denmark was a direct inspiration from the northern ballads in this island,[1] in the wake of the transmission of the French Romances from West to East, he has

[1] *Ante*, p. 183, note.

yet to explain, among other things, that the ballad of *Thord of Hafsgaard* is not an obvious recension of the *Lay of Thrym*,[1] or that the *Child Sveidal* of Reformation times is not a poor recast of the older poem.[2]

[1] *Corpus Poeticum Boreale*, i. 176-180 501.
[2] See Prof. Ker's *Epic and Romance*, pp. 146, 147.

CHAPTER VII.

DRAMATIC ORIGINS: THE DRAMA IN FRANCE.

IMPORTANCE OF THE DRAMA IN THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY—THE EARLIEST FORMS—HISTORICAL AND CRITICAL DIFFICULTIES—THE QUESTION OF ORIGIN—THE RELATIONSHIP OF THE FORMS: MIRACLE, MYSTERY, MORALITY—THE FORCES OF SECULARISATION—THEIR FLUIDITY—THE INTRUSION OF THE VERNACULAR—ITS EFFECTS—THE INTENTION OF THE MORALITY—ITS DIFFERENT FUNCTIONS—ANALOGY BETWEEN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE DRAMA AND THE EVOLUTION OF THE BALLAD—THE EARLY FRENCH DRAMA—THE MOST TYPICAL—THE "JEUX," "REPRÉSENTATIONS," AND "HISTOIRES"—THE "MIRACLES"—THEIR GENERAL PURPORT—THEIR POPULARITY—THE "MYSTÈRES"—POINTS OF CONTRAST WITH THE "MIRACLES"—THE GREAT MYSTERY-CYCLES—THE TURNING-POINT OF THE RELIGIOUS DRAMA—THE PROFANE MYSTERIES—THE SECULAR DRAMA BEFORE THE FIFTEENTH CENTURY—THE "MORALITÉ"—THE "FARCE"—THE "SOTTIE"—THE "SERMON JOYEUX" AND THE "MONOLOGUE"—THE "MORALITÉS"—'CONDAMNACION DE BANCQUET'—ITS PROLOGUE—OTHER "MORALITÉS"—'PATHELIN'—'LA PASTÉ ET LA TARTE'—THEMES OF THE "MORALITÉS"—THE POLITICAL ELEMENT—THE INFLUENCE OF 'PATHELIN'—THE SPIRIT OF LATER FRENCH COMEDY—OF THE AUTHORS—THE VERSIFICATION.

If we consider the fifteenth century, as indeed we must, an experimental period, then the drama is its chief experiment. The history of the drama is the

autobiography of the century. Its bearing on the literary and social energies of the age is more complete and emphatic than that of any other branch of literary art. Even the assertion of the popular spirit in the poetry and less cultured ballad and song of the fifteenth century is little more than the expression of a tendency when compared with the triumph of the *bourgeois* idea in the drama. Though the evidence of the vogue of the drama as a *genre* of modern literature reaches back to the twelfth century, it is not till the late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries that it assumes its first definite phases as an individual art. It seemed, therefore, not amiss, in the present plan, to leave the consideration of the earlier facts for treatment in this volume, and so to give to these remains, which appear rather anomalous amid the courtly epic and lyric, their true perspective in literary history.

Importance of the drama in the fifteenth century.

The earliest forms.

Some critical difficulties beset us in the interpretation of the earlier stages of the European drama. There is the question of origin: whether the earliest plays are the direct outcome of the liturgical practice of the Church by a process of glossing and expansion, in both a literary and spectacular sense; or whether there is an appreciable interference from the academic drama, which preserved the Terentian tradition in the monasteries; or, again, whether the drama was not developed under the influence of the use and wont of the debased Roman stage. The evidence of Du Méril's

Historical and critical difficulties.

collection[1] appears to prove an easy gradation — of the *Mystery* at least — from the liturgical 'offices' of the *Sepulchre*, the *Magi*, and others to pieces like the Latin mystery of *Daniel*, which has all the characteristics of the early vernacular drama. Of the pseudo-classicism of the kind presented in Hrotsuitha's plays it would be hard to find any indication, though, as in the Orleans MS. of the thirteenth century, there *are* occasional echoes of Virgil and others. Further, the art of representation cannot well be related to Roman tradition through the rascal mimes and *joculatores* who scoured the provinces at the fall of the Empire, for it was obviously original and local from the fact that the early drama, even in the vernacular, was played not by professional actors but by the clergy and scholars, and, later, by "rude mechanicals." On the other hand, the problem is complicated by the fact that there was a vigorous secular drama in France as early as the thirteenth century. A second point of difficulty is the chronological relationship of the different dramatic phases, whether the religious play necessarily preceded, or even did precede, the secular, and, in the case of the former, whether the treatment of legendary material preceded that from the Old Testament, or even that from the New. Thirdly, there is the difficulty of giving an accurate technical definition to the different literary forms—Miracle, Mystery, and Morality. The more directly and fully we study the vast *corpus* of the

The question of origin.

The relationship of the forms: Miracle, Mystery, Morality.

[1] *Les Origines latines du théâtre moderne*, reprinted, Paris, 1897.

early European drama, the more we perceive the inadequacy of any cut-and-dried explanation. The best that can be said of it is that it is a rough-and-ready differentiation of *kinds* as expressed by the *names* of certain forms. When it is applied as a chronological test or formulated as an analysis of the changes in dramatic evolution it signally fails. Even in the terminology there is some danger of confusion, as in the calling of the English Mystery a Miracle—to the complete exclusion of the more correct term which is found in France; but the give and take in matters of critical importance is more perplexing. Characteristics of the Miracle reappear in the advanced Mystery; the Mystery and the Morality are suggested in the Miracle; the idea and manner of the later Morality is found in the earliest liturgical drama. In some the interaction of dramatic motives is more elaborate than in others; in few, if any, is there an absolute typical or normal treatment of one or other of these motives. And what shall we say of a play like the *Mary Magdalene*, which is a Miracle by reason of its subject, a Mystery because it incorporates dramatic passages from the life of Christ, and a Morality, spiritually by its picture of the struggle of the good with the bad, and formally by its use of allegorical characters like 'Luxsurya' and Envy? All these considerations are advanced, not to prove the worthlessness of an historical exposition, but merely as a caveat against a too rigid chronological sequence or an *a priori* theory of formal development. We should be justified, for

example, in offering a critical objection to the academic division of the drama into religious or sacred and comic or profane, as being arbitrary, if not unsound, and certainly troublesome when we have to deal with mixed varieties; but it may stand by prescription, as the least harmless of our fixed ideas, and as having some value in a rough classification of the huge mass of details.

The forces of secularisation.

The process of development in the early drama is one of *secularisation*. The drama starts from a strong liturgical basis, concerned chiefly with the central story of Eastertide and the ceremonial of the Sepulchre. In this first stage the germs of later change are present—forces which were ultimately to secularise the dramatic idea, or, in other words, to transform the religious *motif* in whose behalf they had been called into action. These forces are three in number,—the realistic, by which the facts were brought vividly into the ken of the masses; the didactic, by which the hidden meaning was impressed; and the decorative or spectacular, by which the effect of the other two was heightened. The first is the assertion of the popular spirit, even though, in England at least, the comic and libertine qualities do not really appear till a later stage. The second is the assertion of the literary spirit. The third is merely an accessory to both; as a pure form it has but slight and incidental claims to be called dramatic, reaching no higher than the pageant or 'mumming' and, later, the masque. Like it the second is undramatic in intention, but different in

being, by its interaction with the first, dramatic in result. The first, on the other hand, is essentially dramatic, and more definitely so, as the doctrinal idea is gradually eliminated. Finally, the first is the principle of the Miracle and Mystery, the second of the Morality, the third of the Pageant and its kindred forms. It is thus obvious that to say that one form or effect is derived from the other is both true and not true; true, if we mean that the Morality was formally and 'theatrically' based on the Miracle and Mystery, or that the Pageant combined some of the external characteristics of the others, but untrue, if there is any suggestion of a strict chronological sequence of phases. The *fluidity* of these forces, both in their individual movement and in their interaction, is the one interesting and remarkable fact; it is also the very fact which makes historical criticism so difficult and complicated.

Their fluidity.

On the 'popular' side—in the Miracle and Mystery—the secularisation was effected in different ways. The primary effect was produced by the gradual intrusion of the vernacular; and it was the most serious, as its possibilities were unlimited. Its use at once stimulated a public interest, which immediately affected the external conditions of play-going, by forcing the audience from the cramped porch, or even the church itself, to the graveyard around, and ultimately to the village-green. Thence to the town-square was an easy step. As the process went on the professional idea gradually crept in, partly to relieve the clergy, partly to meet the

The intrusion of the vernacular.

requirements of the new matters introduced, in which, as a rule, the clergy could not take part. It is here, if anywhere, that the young drama was influenced by the debased traditions of the Roman stage; it was compelled to turn to the descendants of the mimes when the Church would not supply its growing wants. As a result of this the comic element soon asserted itself, and thereby completed the secularisation. It must be observed, however, that the presence of comedy, in the stricter æsthetic sense, was an additional proof rather than the essential quality of this secularisation. It came more slowly and heavily in England than in France, and it was developed most fully in the literary atmosphere of the Morality. The religious drama was already transformed to popular ends as soon as its serious tone became even slightly tinged by individual fancy. The institution of the Festival of Corpus Christi[1] was a confession by the Church of the strength of the secular tendencies, and it acted as a fillip rather than as a restraint. The interference of the gilds broke the last bond of nominal connection with the Church, and gave immediate opportunities for a further extension of the subject-matter which was incompatible with the original idea of the liturgical play. Thus, by the cumulation of a variety of influences, all starting from the original notion of realising and emphasising the central doctrine of the Redemption, the drama became 'human' in its

Its effects.

[1] By Urban IV. (1264), but not effectual till the confirmation by Clement V. (1311).

tone and imitative of the familiar facts of human life.

The Miracle and Mystery represent, however, but one of the phases in the transformation of the drama.

The intention of the Morality.

In the Morality there is a reversion to the didactic purpose which had been gradually lost in the development of the Mystery. The expression of this intention was by abstraction and personification, caused partly by the same inherent necessity which had compelled the Church from the earliest times to clothe her emotions in symbolism, partly, and chiefly, because it satisfied the contemporary longing for allegory. Thus it is in the fifteenth century that we find the fullest and purest type of Morality. It is the least dramatic of all the forms, because of its allegorical intensity: the least real and the most *literary* of them all, even though it is based formally and theatrically upon the more dramatic Mystery. Its literary quality does not save it from dulness, especially in England, and its substitution of learning and an imperfect interest in intellectual culture for the religious subject-matter of the older didactic drama produces most depressing results. Later, however, it revolts against this dreary schoolmastering and love of abstraction. The names of the characters remain for a time, but the life of the play, as in the English *Hycke-Scorner*, becomes more real and human. Ultimately the names, too, disappear. In this change to the concrete the Morality showed the good effects of the purely literary apprenticeship of its earlier stage, for it faced the new realities in

a more literary spirit than was possible to the Mystery. It was forced to a certain extent to be original. It could no longer be satisfied with stringing together the disjointed tableaux of the religious play; it had to make its own plot and to move its own puppets, and both the making and the moving were a new source of artistic pleasure. The necessity, for example, of introducing the 'Vice' to relieve the monotony of the stereotyped struggle between good and evil implied a freshening of dramatic instinct and dramatic enjoyment. The flower of this new growth is to be found in the French Moralities rather than in the English—in the stage-fun and witty dialogue of the *Farces* and *Sotties*. There are thus in reality two forms of Morality, which are antithetic to each other in their treatment of a didactic purpose; the earlier allegorical Morality, and the later Morality in which the desire to create and amuse is the first and last of the dramatist's art. We may also say that there was ultimately a third variety, in which the happy art of the French *Farce* and the English Interlude is frighted from its simple pleasure-giving by politics and ecclesiastical satire, which are but the didactic bogey in disguise. The English Morality suffered less than the French, and in some cases it was helped to its best efforts; but, fortunately, the regular drama was already taking definite form, and these later vagaries had no power to arrest its progress.

Its different functions.

There is a certain parallelism between the process of secularisation of the drama and the evolution of the

popular ballad.[1] This is suggested in three ways: first, in the passage from the cyclic idea of the mystery-drama—as in the *Vieil Testament* and the more obvious gild-series in England—to the individual and shorter play; secondly, in the addition of new characters like the Vice in the later Morality, or the more specific Watkyn, the bully in Parfre's Candlemas Play, or even the nameless 'garcios' and 'messengers,' the originals of the Elizabethan 'gentlemen,' and in the gradual elaboration of the rôles of these personages; and thirdly, in the historical, political, or Reformation quality of the later examples of the drama before it became 'regular' in England or 'classical' in France. A fourth point will be referred to immediately when we come to the discussion of the early Miracles in France. The comparison must not, however, be pushed too far, for the facts are connected in the one case with a process of degeneration of the romance, in the other with a process of development in the drama, even though the second may be considered in a sense a degeneration of the original liturgical idea. Yet the analogy has its value in emphasising what was undoubtedly a main literary principle of the Transition period.

Analogy between the development of the drama and the evolution of the ballad.

The reader may have remarked that I have confined my references to the French and English drama. The history of each of these and an examination of their connection and main contrasts really exhausts the subject of the early European

The early French drama.

[1] See chap. vi.

drama, though it will not excuse the omission of a *resumé* of its progress in the other countries which have already claimed our attention in this volume. Further, as far as the early drama is concerned, an account of the French alone might suffice, as being not only the fullest, whether in range of time, or in elaboration of varieties, or in sheer number of examples, but as supplying, for critical purposes, the types of all the forms which sprang up in contemporary literatures either under its influence or quite independently. The French genius has always been strongly dramatic, and there is no parallel in any other nation to the continuity of its development and, in especial, of its treatment of comedy. By the fifteenth century when the citizens of the larger towns had completely discredited the conventionalities of chivalry and had found their amusement in the burlesques of the Church, in tradesmen's knaveries, or woman's naughtiness, French comedy was at once in the making and made. In it we see the emancipation of the *esprit gaulois*, that merry but relentless spirit, in the domain of letters, where it has continued down to our own day. There is no genuine distinction, beyond the external changes of literary fashion, between the wit and satire of the early farces and the *polissonneries* which delight modern Paris; and the success of the revival in our time of a piece like *Pathelin* is secured, not because it is, as every age must admit, a masterpiece, or because it tickles the antiquarian palate, but because it is identical in spirit with the comedy of the boulevards. This is of course

The most typical.

strictly true of the comic drama only, for there is a wide spiritual and formal gulf between the early religious and serious plays and the later classical tragedy. On the other hand, it is true that comedy is both more prolific and more representative of French genius—a fact which gives to the fifteenth century, when it reached its first adequate literary expression, a position of great importance.[1]

The jeux, représentations, *and* histoires.

In the twelfth and thirteenth centuries the religious dramas are called *jeux*, or *représentations*, or *histoires*, obvious adaptations of the terms *ludi*, *repraesentationes*, and *historiae* of the so-called Dark Ages. The oldest vernacular play is the Norman *Représentation d'Adam*,[2] which appears to have been written in the twelfth century by some unknown author. The greater bulk of the dramas of that century are in Latin: the ten examples in the Orléans MS., which seem to belong to this time though the MS. dates from the thirteenth century, are all in Latin. So too is the *Daniel* of the renowned Hilarius; but in his two other extant plays, on *Lazarus* and on an episode of the Life of *St Nicholas*, lines in Old French occasionally intrude. In another piece, on the *Wise and Foolish Virgins*, which has been dated by some as early as the eleventh century, there are longer scraps of the vulgar. But in the Adam play, and in a fragment on the *Resurrection*,

[1] We are not concerned here, except in the most occasional way, with the purely technical elements,—the actors, the acting, and the stage details.

[2] Ed. Luzarche, Tours, 1854; Palustre, Paris, 1877; Bartsch, *Chrestomathie*, Leipzig, 1884.

which is dated towards the close of the same century, the vernacular has completely asserted itself, but this does not imply, as in the case of the secular drama, the immediate infusion of a lay element. The earliest examples of the Miracle play date from the thirteenth century. These are but dramatic adaptations of the pious stories which had been made extremely popular in the previous century by Gautier de Coinci, Jean le Marchant, and others. The evolution of the shorter dramatic pieces from these almost limitless collections, the *Miracles de Notre Dame*, the *Vies des Pères du désert*—Gautier de Coinci's run to almost thirty thousand verses—is a further interesting analogy to the process from romance to ballad to which I have already referred. Thus the *Miracle de Théophile* by Rutebeuf may be considered as a dramatic *précis*, in the crisper form of dialogue between the Virgin, a Bishop, Théophile, Satan, and a few minor characters, of the story of the sinning and repentant priest in which the Middle Ages took such garrulous delight. Another thirteenth-century piece, the *Le Jus* (Jeu) *de Saint Nicholai* of the leper Jean Bodel, selects one of the episodes in the miraculous life of the saint which had been a prolific subject for writers even before Hilarius of Saint-Benoît had made it his own. It has greater historical interest than Rutebeuf's *Miracle*, from the fact that the traditional story plays a smaller part in it, and that the author has introduced other situations as a kind of setting for the particular matter concerning the saint. It was, from the evidence of the prelude,

The Miracles.

written for some special occasion, and it has obvious references to actual, perhaps contemporary, events; but it is chiefly interesting for the picture of low life, shown by the thieves Clikès, Pincedès, and Rasoir, prototypes of the later Bohemians of the Moralities and Farces. Pincedès's jibe—

> "Rasoir, as-tu mengié herens?
> Tu en as bien te part béue"—

is quite in the spirit of the topers of the "Pomme du Pin," and somewhat disconcerting at such an early stage of the liturgical drama.

These two Miracles are the only examples in the thirteenth century, unless it be that some of the *Notre-Dame* series, preserved in a fourteenth-century MS., belong to that time. No less than forty of these are preserved, together with some lyrical pieces, in one MS. collection, which probably represents the stock-in-trade of some early dramatic company, like the later "Confrères de la Passion," or is the record of a contest, or of the successful pieces at successive contests, in some *puy* or academy for the encouragement of poets. All deal nominally with miracles of Our Lady; but, even more than in Rutebeuf's work, the human interest of secular story and contemporary life predominates. The Virgin is the *dea ex machina*, who intervenes, almost at the last moment, in behalf of misused virtue, and for an object-lesson of heavenly grace. It must be remembered that the miraculous *dénoûment* is not, as in the later drama, a proof of the author's weakness of invention.

The *Miracles* lay no claim to originality in the main outlines of the story; they are versions of older and generally well-known romances, *chansons de geste*, or legends of the saints. Whatever claim they may make must be from their new treatment of the subjects in dramatic form and from the workaday sentiments and descriptions of contemporary manners which are imbedded in the simple dialogue.[1] The History of *Griselidis*, the "Patient Griselda," is probably the only fourteenth-century dramatic piece of a lay type in which the Virgin does not play a part. The persistent seriousness of the treatment, unbroken by any of the artisan comedy of the other *Miracles*, gives it a place apart among the origins of the Drama.

Their general purport.

So far, therefore, the dramatic type is a *remaniement* of the popular legend and story of the miraculous intervention of Heaven, generally retelling only an episode or portion of the earlier material, and expressing it in the crude realism of contemporary life. The plays are considerably shorter than their originals, and are also distinct units, in no literary relation to their neighbours, beyond illustrating the good-will and power of Our Lady; and, formally, they soon show a decided tendency to pass from the irregular metres of the earliest *jeux* and the longer lines of the romances and *chansons de geste* to the shorter octosyllabic couplet. In the fifteenth century these conditions are modified in several ways, as

[1] The *Miracles de Notre-Dame* have been edited by MM. Gaston Paris and Ulysse Robert, Paris, 8 vols., 1876-93. Several are printed in Monmerqué & Michel, *Théâtre français au moyen age*, 1885.

a result of the immense popularity of the drama, both religious and profane. Stories are told of towns being emptied of their citizens when plays were acted beyond the gates. M. Petit de Julleville has calculated that the extant texts of religious pieces alone must extend to more than a million lines of verse. This mass is emphatic proof of the trend of popular taste. As a picture-gallery of the life and thought of the century, or as an index of the general mediocrity of its literary efforts, it is invaluable and unrivalled.

Their popularity.

Something of the change in the character of these religious plays is implied in the new name *Mystère*, which appears first in 1402, in a patent granted by Charles VI. to the "Confrères de la Passion," and is in vogue throughout France by the middle of the century. The historical origin of the term is still a vexed question. The idea of *ministerium* seems to be indicated by the earliest application of the term to the dramatic 'offices' of the "Confrères de la Passion" and the pageantry of royal and burghal festivities; but it is highly probable, as M. Petit de Julleville has pointed out, that the public mind soon confounded the dogmatic mystery (*mysterium*) with the dramatic mystery, "the one being sometimes the representation of the other."[1]

The Mystères.

[1] *Histoire de la litt. française*, ii. 408. It is difficult to accept without reserve the view, supported by Du Méril (*Origines*, pp. 56, 57) and by Dr Ward (*Eng. Dram. Lit.*, 2nd edit., i. 29, 57), that the etymology is *mysterium*. The quotations from the Acts of the Council of Trullo and the Synod of Worms, or from the old German glossary (*Misterium*, Gotlichoffenbarung), though interesting, do not

The distinction between the Mysteries and the Miracles in regard to their subjects is not always clear. The familiar definition that the former are concerned with Old and New Testament history and doctrine and the latter with the legendary accounts of the Virgin and the Saints is at fault, since a large section of the Mysteries deals with the lives and legends of the Saints. Even in the manuscripts we occasionally find the terms used in a way inconsistent with whichever view we may adopt. The principal distinction seems to be that the Miracles deal with episodes of patristic story, in which the miraculous interference of Heaven is shown, almost invariably through the agency of the Virgin; whereas the Mysteries deal with Biblical story and hagiography, in which this element need not be, and rarely is, present. The Miracle is the more artistic, appealing to the audience rather by the plot, and relying on the thrill of the divine *dénoûment*. The Mystery, especially in the earlier forms, is more pedagogic, more historical, more concerned with the commonplaces of religious knowledge, which it illustrates, in delightful anachronism, by the familiar facts of daily life. Other minor differences follow thereon, as the marked reaction in the Mystery towards inordinate length of treatment, and the forma-

Points of contrast with the Miracles.

prove Du Méril's contention. A phrase like *Resurrectionis mysterium*, which he interprets as 'office,' rather suggests 'service' (cf. also *minister, minstrel, ménestral*). At the same time, I should say that the word is not directly connected, as is sometimes said, with *mestier, mistere* (*métier*) because of its ultimate association with the Gilds, but that it is in some relation of cousinship to that term.

tion of cycles of Mysteries, in contrast with the isolation of each of the Miracles, even in a series like that of the *Miracles de Notre-Dame*. When a writer made a Mystery out of the first chapter of Genesis, the second chapter suggested a sequel; if breath permitted, he might proceed onwards to Malachi and the Apocalypse, and thereafter might start on a full round of the Calendar of Saints. From the point of view of the pious playgoer it came to be the practical difference between an hour in the afternoon and days, or even weeks, in the company of the Prophets and Saints. This does not, however, imply either a continuity in authorship or even in representation, but only that, with the turn of popular taste to a practically limitless subject, there had arisen the logical necessity of piling on sequel after sequel and of filling up the gaps between existing versions. And it is clear, in England at least, that the enthusiasm of the Gilds compelled the writing up of plays or the subdivision of others, so that every tanner's son might have his share in honouring his religion and his craft.

The great Mystery-cycles.

The Mysteries fall into three great cycles: The Old Testament (*Le Mistére du Vieil Testament*); the New Testament (*La Nativité, La Passion*, &c.); and the Lives of the Saints. The Old Testament series [1] is a fifteenth-century conglomerate

[1] Ed. by the late Baron James de Rothschild for the 'Société des anciens textes français,' Paris, 1878-91, 6 vols. The editor inclined to the view that the grouping dated from the middle of the fifteenth century, and that it followed as one of the results of the appearance of the dramas of the Grebans.

of pieces written probably at different times and by different authors. This is implied in the title of Pierre de Dru's printed edition (*c.* 1500), *Le Mistére du Viel Testament par personnages . . . auquel sont contenus les mistéres cy après declairez.* The inequalities in treatment and the omissions of important portions may suggest that it is a printer's collection of such material as happened to be accessible, or that it was an endeavour to supply a working copy of the better known and most desired plays in the church repertory, but it is more likely that it expresses an intention to emphasise those portions of the Old Canon which have an exegetic connection with the New, such as the Creation, the Fall, or the story of Abraham.[1] The complete cycle runs to nearly fifty thousand verses, and must have occupied, when played in full, not less than three weeks; but such occasions must have been rare, and there are several indications that each *confrérie* prepared its own acting copies. After the publication of the complete cycle separate editions of certain sections became common. Some of the English Chester plays are almost literal translations of portions of the series—early and interesting examples in our dramatic literature of "adaptation from the French." The New Testament cycle includes a number of histories of Christ's life, of which the *Passion* of Arnoul Greban (1450)[2] and the adaptation of the same by Jean

[1] There is also an Old Testament Mystery of *Job* (? 1478) which is not included in the *Vieil Testament.* It is printed in the Duc de la Vallière's *Bibliothèque du théâtre françois*, Dresden, 1768, i. 53.

[2] Ed. Gaston Paris and G. Raynaud, Paris, 1878. It runs to nearly 35,000 lines.

Michel (*c.* 1480) are the best known. The Mystery of the *Acts of the Apostles*, by the brothers Arnoul and Simon Greban, extends to nearly sixty-two thousand lines, and this the good folks of Bourges, as late as 1536, sat out during the space of no less than forty days.[1] The third cycle continued the idea of the Apostles' Mystery, and gave a popular history of the chief saints down to the thirteenth century. The philological and historical value of this huge mass is of the highest importance: in literary interest it is mediocre in respect of ideas and art, but representative as a compendium of the ordinary knowledge and sentiments of a commonplace epoch. In this case a part is as good as the whole, and the critic who tastes but a small piece will know the flavour quite as well as that preposterous person who may have stomach enough for the whole gourd. He will find no characteristics additional to what he may discover in the non-dramatic prose and verse. He will be struck by the amplification of what he has already learned, as, for example, in the personal treatment of Death—

"O mort mortelle, furibonde."

—*Le Déluge.*

"La première rasse,
Le quel monstre, chose certaine
Qu'il fault que tout homme ainssi passe."

—*La Mort D'Adam.*

He will probably be amused by the naïveté of the situations, which forces itself so uncritically upon

[1] P. de Julleville, *Histoire de la litt. française*, ii. 409.

the modern mind, when he reads the speeches of Tubal, Jubal, and their seven brethren before they perish in rotation in the Flood, or by the dialogue of Nimrod's journeymen-masons Cul Esventé, Pille Mortier, Gaste Boys, and Casse Tuilleau at work on the Tower of Babel, passing each other mortar, cement, or a trowel, or by the disasters which ensue when Gaste Boys falls into jargon like

> "Oriolla gallaricy
> Breth gathahat mirlidonnet,"

and his companions follow in "Babylonish dialect." The fifteenth century is fond of *argot*, but it here surpasses itself in a realistic rendering of the "confusion of tongues." So too in the scene in *Abraham et Sarray*, where Sarah instructs her *chamberière* Hagar, the plain-spokenness of the older drama will afford no little entertainment. Only occasionally, as in the play of the *Sacrifice d'Abraham*, does the dramatist transcend the amiably puerile.

The turning-point of the religious drama.

The fifteenth century marks the crisis in the history of the early religious drama. The Mystery is the fullest development, both formally and in literary influence. The liturgical idea had been gradually laicised; the clergy were not now the sole authors; and the seriousness of the early 'office' had been to a large extent lost in the *bourgeois* actualities of the later examples. The form lingered on till the middle of the next century, and even later in a few remote corners, but, a literary *genre*, it came suddenly to an end as in the heat of

the Reformation, when the Act of the Parliament of 1548 forbade the "Confrères de la Passion" to play the mystery of the Passion, "ne autres mysteres sacrez." Through religious zeal, Catholic as well as Protestant, the comic spirit was exiled to the "mysteres profanes, honnestes, et licites": whereupon the French public soon discovered that they cared little for the Biblical Nimrod without Casse Tuilleau and his brethren.

The "profane Mysteries."

Two interesting pieces represent an intermediate variety between the secular and profane drama, and have been called "profane Mysteries." They are the *Siège d'Orléans*,[1] a rendering, perhaps from chronicles, perhaps from recollection, of the then quite recent exploit of Jean d'Arc, and the *Destruction de Troye la Grant* (*c.* 1452)[2] by Jacques Milet of Orléans. They are not Mysteries in the strict sense, but they are carefully modelled on the religious pieces—a fact which is important as showing not only the immense popularity of the Mysteries, but as indicating certain changes which came as a consequence of that popularity. Examples such as these foreshadow in England the History-Play. When the French theatre ultimately became interested in profane tragedy as well as profane comedy, it did not take its Troy story from a mediæval romance.

The remains of the secular drama antecedent to the

[1] Ed. Guessard, 1862.

[2] Reprod. and ed. E. Stengel, Marburg, 1883. See also M. Petit de Julleville's *Mystères*, i. 315, ii. 569.

fifteenth century are less numerous. The earliest examples date from the thirteenth century: the *Jeu d'Adam* (*Li Jus Adan*) *ou de La Feuillée* (*c.* 1262) and the *Jeu Robin et Marion* (*c.* 1280), both by Adam de la Halle, or "Adam the Hunchback," poet and musician of Arras (1230-1288). Another *jeu* of the *Pilgrim* (*Pèlerin*) ascribed by some, rather unreasonably, to this Adam, may be dated about the close of the century. A fourth, *Garçon et L'Aveugle* (*c.* 1280), completes the list. There are none in the fourteenth century, except two dialogue-pieces by Eustache Deschamps—*Maître Trubert et Antroignart* and the *Offices de l'Hotel du Roi*, and these are almost on the threshold of the fifteenth century. We are apt to misjudge the vitality of the early comedy by this paucity of remains. The originality and variety is remarkable, and each play is almost a *genre* in itself. The *Jeu d'Adam* is a satirical comedy, in which the author pokes fun at his married life and at his friends generally, and proposes to leave all at Arras and go as a student to Paris. But on the very night of his decision the fairies come to feast under some shady trees (*la feuillée*) near by, and thwart his selfish plans for the journey. The intervention of the sprites, which is in quaint contrast with the rather broad picture of Adam's family affairs, is in a sense a pagan analogy to the appearance of the Virgin in the Miracles, and serves much the same dramatic purpose. The conception of the three fairies, Morgue, Maglore, and Arsile, and of Crokesos, the *homme d'armes* of Hellekin, King of Gnomeland, has some-

The secular drama before the fifteenth century.

thing of the touch of the faërie of Thomas the Rhymer. *Robin et Marion* is a pastoral comedy on the love-making of these humble folks of the mediæval Arcadia. A number of songs are scattered throughout the dialogue. It is really the first *opéra comique*, but, like Adam's other piece, it seems to have exerted no direct influence whatever on the later light comedy. It has no satirical intention like *La Feuillée*, and it has no characters like the mortals Rikece Aurris, Hane li Merciers, Gillot, and other blatant *bourgeois*. *Garçon et l'Aveugle* has the *timbre* of the fifteenth-century farces, but it cannot have any obvious 'literary' bearing on them; and the knavery of Maître Trubert in the *dit* "par personnages" of Deschamps is a foretaste of the rogueries of the Middle Comedy. It is reasonable to think that *Garçon et l'Aveugle*, rather than the fantastic plays of Adam de la Halle, expresses the growing intention of the French stage, but the fourteenth century was, as far as record goes, entirely absorbed in the Miracles.

In the fifteenth century the secular and comic drama rises suddenly into prominence, rivalling the multitudinous Mysteries in sheer mass, and excelling them in literary vivacity. A variety of titles, used from the first, indicates a subdivision in kind. These are *Moralité*, *Farce*, *Sottie*, *Monologue*, *Sermon joyeux*: and it may be well to describe the characteristics of each, as far as it is possible to differentiate the forms of an art which was defiant of rule. The *Moralité* implies by its name a didactic

The Moralité.

purpose, but this would not distinguish it very clearly from the *Mystère*. Nor would the presence of the comic, and even of the satirical, make an adequate contrast with the religious plays, in which these elements were common. The comic and satirical are of course much in excess; but the main differences are, first, that, whereas the *Mystère* is presumably historical and canonical, the *Moralité* is, like the fabliau, the devising of secular wit; and, secondly, that the *Moralité* is decidedly allegorical. In this latter respect it not only reflected one of the prevailing moods of the century, but it passed through a phase exactly similar to the change from the personalities and episode of the old romance to the later figurative paladins like *Liesse* and *Grand Amour*. Nevertheless, however much the *Moralités* may have been influenced by the popular *Mystères*, their fictitious character is analogical to, and not derived from, the historical idea.[1] The *Farce*, on the other hand, is the antithesis of the *Mystère*, though its historical connection with it may be closer than with the *Moralité*. In the church offices the *farsa* was an explanatory passage or additional matter interpolated in the authorised ritual, as in the macaronic *épîtres farcies* and other forms. On the early stage the function of the *Farce* was to add variety to the long-drawn representation of Mystery-subjects—a sort of piquant stuffing to the plain goose which had begun

The Farce.

[1] The *Moralité* as a *genre* is dead by the middle of the sixteenth century. Even the name is not found in the theatre after 1550. (See P. de Julleville, *Histoire*, ii. 425.)

to pall on the popular palate—as, for example, in the case of the mystery of *La Vie de Saint Fiacre*. The etymology of the word explains not only the relation of the piece to that with which it was associated, but perhaps also its own composition, which followed no rule and was sometimes a mixture of different dialects and jargons,[1] and at other times a mere *coq-à-l'âne* or whimsical medley. It is easy to see that from the very first it would incline to the comic, and that when it was fully developed as an independent *genre*, it would have no other end but merriment or broad fun.[2] The *Sottie* is but a variety of the *Farce*,[3] or, more strictly, a *Farce* played by the *Sots*, the ribald folk who continued on the secular stage the traditions of the saturnalia of the *Fête des Fous* and the *Fêtes de l'Ane*, which up to the fifteenth century had been celebrated within the churches of France. We must be careful, however, not to explain the *Sottie* as the direct outcome of these *Fêtes*, though it may have been influenced by them in the details of the acting. The *Sottie* is dramatic in intention, and is not merely a carnival pageant. The long-eared caps and yellow-and-green motley of the actors—the *Enfants sans Souci* of Paris, the *Suppôts*

The Sottie.

[1] As when Pathelin in his sham delirium discourses in Limousin, Breton, Picard, Norman, and what not.

[2] *E.g.*, a farce played at Dijon in 1447, as a break in the representation of a Mystery of *Saint Éloi*, is described—"par manière de faire reaveiller ou rire les gens" (*Répertoire du théâtre comique*, 1886, pp. 330, 331).

[3] In Sibilet's *Art poétique* (1548) the identity is made clear—"Le vray subject de la farce ou sottie françoise sont badineries, nigauderies, et toutes sottises émouvantes à ris et à plaisirs."

de la Mère Folle of Dijon, or the *Cornards* of Rouen—supplied the only distinction between the two kinds: in the dramatic treatment of the World of Fools and its follies there is absolutely no difference, unless it be that the *Sottie* has a stronger political and satirical bias. This followed naturally from its association with the cap and bells, which had been the badge of free-speech in the Middle Ages, and remained the professional emblem of satirists like Brant and Erasmus and the excuse of the later court-fool. A *Sermon joyeux*, entitled *Les Fous*, is really a *Sottie* in monologue, in which the preachment "all men are fools" is divided into three heads, of the quality, of the quantity, and of the mode of life of fools. There is no doubt that the secularisation of the *Sots*, if we may so express the fact of their exile from the churches, gave a strong impetus to the writing of farces, but it is also true that they accepted the conditions of the comic stage as they found them and became the exponents of a style which had grown up apart from the humbler pageantry of their church-revels. To the latter we may trace the *Sermon joyeux*, which, with its derivative the *Monologue*, is not really a dramatic form,[1] though it has theatrical associations. It originated in the licence of the *Fêtes* in which some 'fool' invariably made fun of the preachers in a mock sermon. When the *Sots*

The Sermon joyeux *and the* Monologue.

[1] A curious form is found in the monologue *Le Bien et le Mal des Dames* (ed. Montaiglon-Rothschild, xi. 176-191), where a single actor plays three separate rôles in an argumentative discourse on the goodness and badness of women.

were driven to the booths and market-places, they were not likely to lay aside such a ready instrument for attacking the ungenerous Church. The parody exactly suited the temper of the *bourgeoisie*, and at once obtained a new lease of life as well as a certain literary importance. These discourses may have been written to be read as well as to be acted, and it is quite impossible to determine to which end any individual piece was composed.

The Moralités.

Nearly all the *Moralités* date from the latter half of the fifteenth century or the earlier half of the sixteenth.[1] It is impossible to give a list of them. The most interesting, for historical reasons, are the *Condamnacion de Bancquet* (1507); *L'Empereur qui tua son neveu;* Andrieu de la Vigne's *Honneur des Dames*, &c.; *Lazare, Marthe, Jacob, Marie Madeleine;* Georges Chastellain's *La Paix de Peronne; La Pauvre Fille Villageoise;* and *Les Blasphémateurs.* The first is a gastronomic allegory, describing the misfortune of some jolly fellows (*Je-boy-a-vous, Je-pleige-d'autant*, and others) who, having fared well at the board of *Disner*, proceed to *Soupper*. The last ungenerously hands them over to a band of ailments including *Epilencie, Colicque, Gravelle*, from whom they escape with difficulty. Undaunted they go to *Bancquet*, at whose house they again encounter the fiends of indigestion. Four of the good fellows are done to death. The others make

Condamnacion de Bancquet.

[1] For a descriptive list of these and of other early specimens of the French drama see M. Petit de Julleville's valuable *Répertoire du théâtre comique en France au moyen age*, Paris, 1886.

their moan to *Experience*, who orders the villain host to be arrested. He is condemned to death and strangled by *Diette*. In his dying moments he craves each of his good allies the leeches to say a mass for his soul—

> "Car ils ont eu a besongner
> A guerir les maux que j'ay faictz."

A prose prologue states the interesting fact that, as the *Jeux* or *Moralités* are not always easily represented in public and are often preferred for amusement in the study, the author has been at pains to add glosses and comments, "tant pour elucider la dicte matiere comme aussi advertir le lecteur des acteurs, livres, et passaiges desquels j'ay extraict les alegations, histoires, et auctoritez inserées en ceste presente compilacion."[1] This has an important bearing on the problem of the dramatic principle of many of the earlier pieces. Elsewhere in the preface the author of the *Condamnacion* says, "j'ay voulu ordonner cest opuscule en telle façon qu'il soit propre a demonstrer a tous visiblement par personnages, gestes, et parolles sur eschaffaut ou autrement." *L'Empereur qui tua son neveu* is interesting both on account of its literary merits and because the *dénoûment* of the tragic situation is solved by the use of a miracle—the Host placing itself upon the lip of the dying Emperor, when the priest had refused to forgive his slaughter of a libertine nephew. *Hon-*

Its prologue.

Other Moralités.

[1] Ed. Fournier (*Le théâtre français*, 1872). The play is preserved in a prose book *La nef de santé*, Paris, 1507.

neur des Dames is a simple allegory of good and false knighthood, strongly reminiscent of the *Roman de la Rose*. Its wonderful verse ingenuity, too often worked up at the cost of sense, makes it hard for us to believe that it was represented, even, as M. Petit de Julleville has suggested, in some *puy* or society in honour of Our Lady. The *Lazare* might well be a fragment of a Mystery, stopping short just before the profane life of the Magdalen is sanctified. As it stands, it represents a Scriptural story without its lesson, and it admits us merely to the *vie intime* of the unregenerate damsel. If it be not a fragment, it is surely one of the most significant examples of the working of the fifteenth-century spirit in France. Chastellain's *Paix de Peronne*, which celebrates the peace between Louis XI. and Charles the Bold, represents that class of *Moralités* of the pageant type which were written for special occasions, in marked contrast with the more universal yet simple purpose of a play like the *Pauvre Fille Villageoise*, in which the wicked lord is turned from wrong-doing by the strenuous virtue of a poor girl. And yet the dignified tone of the latter is hardly typical of even the *Moralités* of the cynical woman-scoffing century. In the Norman morality *Les Blasphémateurs*[1] the dramatic quality is remarkable, especially in the tragic *crescendo* of defiance. The chief of the three evil-doers has a certain kinship with Molière's hero of the *Festin de Pierre*, both in his personal vanity and in his cynical brutality; and the catastrophe of the piece,

[1] Reprinted, in very limited editions, by H. de Chateaugiron (Paris, 1820) and Silvestre (Paris, 1831).

when Guerre, Famine, and Mort come to the aid of the outraged Church, might be a sketch of the vengeance of the Commander on the later Don Juan, or, in some striking respects, of the triumph of Death in the modern play *Lucrèce Borgia*. The dramatic intensity of the character of Death may be taken as a supplementary illustration of what has been said in earlier pages regarding the realism of the fifteenth-century spectre. Of the other pieces the majority are tedious allegories like *Excellance, Science, Paris, Peuple*, or *Pouvre Peuple, Bon Renon, Pluseurs, Envie, Flaterie, Raison, et Honeur*, varying in their number of personages from four to as many as forty-eight,[1] or even fifty-nine.[2]

The early French theatre reached its highest point in the farce, and the best of the farces is the immortal *Pathelin*,[3] written by an unknown author, probably in the latter half of the century. It is necessarily a rare thing at this early stage of the French comic theatre that a composition should completely express the contemporary mood of life and letters, and, at the same time, should disclose all the vital qualities of a masterpiece. *Pathelin* does both: it transports us at once to the circle of the Basoche and its witty chicaneries, and in our day it has genuinely amused the habitués of the Théâtre-Français, who are reasonably prejudiced in favour of

Pathelin.

[1] As in *L'Homme juste et l'homme mondain.*

[2] As in *Bien avisé, mal avisé.*

[3] *Patelin* is a later incorrect spelling, preserved in the derived words "pateliner," "patelinage," &c. For the etymology of the name see P. de Julleville, *Répertoire*, p. 205.

modern oddities like M. Perrichon. The *motif* of the piece is extremely simple. A crafty *avocat*, Pierre Pathelin, obtains some cloth on false pretences from a woollen-draper Guillaume Joceaume, himself a knave, and both are ultimately outdone by the cunning of Guillaume's shepherd, Aignelet, whom they had treated as a blockhead. Thus described, it is but a commonplace story of petty fraud; but in its treatment, in the just proportion and in the irresistible comedy of every episode, it is of a very high order of literary art. A kindred theme inspires the excellent *Pasté et la Tarte*, in which two rogues ingeniously plunder a cook-shop of an eel-pasty, and come to grief in their subsequent design on a tempting tart. Translated to the modern stage, it would be a conventional Drury Lane harlequinade: for clown, the *coquin* who escapes punishment; for pantaloon, his less fortunate fellow who bungles the theft of the tart; for shopkeeper, the *patissière*; for 'policeman,' her husband; and, for scene, a pastry-cook's shop, with pies and tarts discovered. And so with most of the *Farces* and *Sotties*, in which the characters are the nimble-fingered folk of Villon's Paris — with perhaps the single exception of *Pathelin*, which is more than mere fifteenth-century clownage. Of social themes for satiric treatment in the Farce, the ways of woman is the favourite. In this respect the drama sustains the tradition of the fabliau, just as in its delight in knavery and petty fraud it also preserves those qualities of the fabliau which have

La Pasté et la Tarte.

Themes of the Moralités.

their fullest development in the *Renart*. There is genuine comedy in *La Cornette* by Jean d'Abondance, in which an old fool is portrayed in ludicrous devotion to the girl-wife who deceives him. In *Le Cuvier* the poor Jacquinot is so oppressed by his shrewish wife that he is compelled to promise in writing that he will be her maid-of-all-work. One day by fortunate 'accident' he lets slip the end of some family linen which is being wrung, and his spouse falls into the washing-tub. To her repeated cries for help he calmly answers that there is no clause dealing with the situation—"cela n'est pas à mon rollet." Despair brings repentance, and the shrew is tamed, to the great glory of husbands, who, it must be admitted, fare uncommonly badly in the early comedy. *L'Obstination des Femmes* might well be the title of more than one farce; marriage is scoffed into bad repute, and the women are at fault. It is not till the next century, in a farce by Margaret of Navarre (*Deux Filles, Deux Mariées*, &c.), that we have a woman's view of her sex's sorrows, as Christine de Pisan had offered more solemnly in non-dramatic verse. In the farce of *La Pippée* the allegorical personages, such as Bruyt-d'Amour, Plaisant-Follie, and Cuider ("guide et patron des amoureux confiants et fanfarons"), remind us of the manner of the *Roman de la Rose*, though not of its high seriousness. In other farces, characters like "Va-Partout," "Ne-te-bouge" in Jehan Destrées' *Va-Partout* (1472) are quite common.

A large percentage of the Farces are political or

politico-social satires. They offered a ready opportunity for the expression of public feeling on all questions, from the actual matters of the Great War to theories of economics (*e.g.*, *Marchandise et Mestier*). A few character-sketches of the military braggarts, directly intended as a satire on the *écorcheurs* of the time of the Hundred Years' War, or of the self-seeking and loose-living clergy of all ranks, have a perennial interest;[1] but the majority are concerned with the passing problems of Church and State policy. The would-be soldier supplies the best fun: Phlipot is a French Falstaff who has poor notions of personal prowess and is ready to shout for anybody "Vivent les plus forts." At the dawn of the Reformation in the next century the Farces become little else than the medium for the *pros* and *cons* of the ecclesiastical strife; they are in fact the pamphlets by which the contending parties appeal to the masses. The material of the *Sermons joyeux* and of the *Monologues* belongs to the same categories: but they deal chiefly with the old dispute about the fair sex, as in *Le Bien et le Mal des Dames*, where the opposing authorities are Jean de Meun and Christine de Pisan; with the *franc-archers* (the *Franc Archier de Bagnolet* is the *Miles Gloriosus* of the century); and, as might be expected, with the shortcomings of the clergy.

The political element.

It is remarkable how *Pathelin* held its own in this

[1] And yet Andrieu de la Vigne's *Le Munyer* (Meunier), in which a priest flirts with a woman in the intervals of his bedside ministrations to her dying husband, has in its cynical ferocity the peculiar *timbre* of the fifteenth century.

unending variety of the early stage — a fact easily proved by the multitude of editions still extant, by the existence of contemporary imitations like the *Testament de Pathelin*, or *Le Chauderonnier, le Savetier, et le Tavernier*, by the persistent though doubtful ascription of the piece to a master like Villon, and by its power as a phrase-maker from the days of Pantagruel[1] onwards. It doubtless lived by its good fun and was a little less a literary pleasure than it is to us; yet its vogue is an interesting testimony against a sweeping condemnation of fifteenth-century taste. What the other pieces, with a few exceptions, lose in the matter of æsthetic and literary value, they make good in antiquarian interest, for there is no body of literature in France or elsewhere, then or at any other time, which throbs so with the life of the age, and expresses so well its whims, its cynicism, and, above all, its coarseness and blasphemy.[2]

The influence of Pathelin.

[1] Though the quotation by Rabelais of portions of this and other works argues that these works had already a certain vogue, it appears none the less obvious that it was his use of them which gave them a literary passport to posterity. "Revenons à nos moutons" has no intrinsic merit or vitality, and it might have had, but for a happy accident, no greater repute than the identical "Iam dic, Postume, de tribus capellis" of the Roman epigrammatist.

[2] It is hard to understand, even with all historical allowances, the extreme licence in, for example, the *Sermon joyeux* of *Bien Boire*, where the "Sitio" of the crucified Christ is taken as a text for an exhortation "pour bien arrouser le gosier." This is quite different from the naïve utterance of the Mysteries, as in the *Trois Rois* of Jean d'Abondance, where Gabriel announces Christ's death to God :—

> "Père Éternel, vous avez tort,
> Et devriez avoir vergogne,
> Votre fils bien-aimé est mort,
> Et vous ronflez."

And there is the higher historical interest that the intention of these pieces is continued in the later French comedy, and that they define the *esprit gaulois* for dramatic purposes for all time. There is no æsthetic identity between the classic drama of Jodelle and the Mysteries which preceded it; but there is only the difference of degree between the young wife in *La Cornette* and Béline in *Le Malade Imaginaire*, or between the unfortunate husbands of fifteenth-century fancy and the *maris confondus* of Molière's day. There is hardly a plot or dramatic *motif* of the Molièresque comedy which is not found in the rough in these early farces.

The spirit of later French comedy.

Of the authors of these pieces, who in some cases indulged both the religious and profane forms, very little is known. The chief are the brothers Greban of Mans—Arnoul, author of a number of *Passions*, and Simon, his collaborator in the *Actes des Apôtres*; Andrieu de la Vigne, court poet to Charles VIII., who, like the more famous Gringoire of the early sixteenth century (1478-1544), wrote in both kinds; Jehan du Pontalais; Jehan Destrées; and Jean d'Abondance. But even a list of these, who like Eustache Mercadé (*fl.* 1425) or Jean Michel of Angers are little better than mere names, is beyond the scope of the present volume.[1] It is of Jehan du

Of the authors.

[1] Several of the best editions of the texts of the early French Drama have been indicated in preceding footnotes. To these may be added the valuable collection of Farces, &c., in the unique volume in the British Museum, printed as vols. i.-iii. of the Bibliothèque

Pontalais that Bonaventure des Périers preserves an entertaining story of an encounter with a curé of Saint-Eustache. Jean had taken up his place outside the church during sermon and had disturbed the curé by the beating of his drum. The louder the preacher waxed, the louder grew the drum. "Qu'on aille faire taire ce tabourin," cried the curé; but no one would go, unless to stay to see Pontalais's fun. The enraged curé left the pulpit, and, going out to the comedian, demanded, "Hé? qui vous fait si hardi de jouer du tabourin, tandis que je presche?" Pontalais replied, "Hé! qui vous fait si hardi de prescher, quand je joue du tabourin?" Whereupon the curé, snatching a knife from his *famulus* by him, made a great gash in one of the drum-skins, and straightway returned to finish his sermon. Pontalais ran after him and crashed the broken drum over his pate (*comme d'un chapeau d'Albanais*). This merry tale might well serve as a text for our discourse on the rise of the popular drama in France. The opposition of the men outside the Church to those inside, the popularity of the *farceurs*, their pertness and cynical irreverence, are delightfully expressed, we might say dramatised, in this adventure on the carrefour of Saint-Eustache.

Elzévirienne (*Ancien théâtre françois*, ed. Viollet le Duc, 1854); *Mystères inédits du* xv^e^ *siècle*, ed. Jubinal, 2 vols., 1837; *Recueil de farces, moralités, et sermons joyeux*, ed. Le Roux de Lincy and Francisque Michel, 4 vols., 1837; and the *Recueil de farces, sotties, et moralités*, ed. P. L. Jacob, 1859. Some texts are scattered throughout the *Recueil de poésies françoises des xv^e^ et xvi^e^ siècles*, ed. Montaiglon and (from vol. x.) Rothschild (see vols. i., ii., iv., xi., xiii.)

The versification of the French drama, especially in its later forms, shows a regularity and elaborateness which goes far to remove the common misconception as to the technical merits of the 'popular' verse. Professor Saintsbury has pointed out how the speeches of the *Farces* are dovetailed into one another within the most complicated stanzas.[1] The habit is less noticeable in the earlier religious drama, but it is far from rare in the *Miracles*. Thus in one of the *Miracles de Notre-Dame*, chosen at random from Monmerqué's collection,[2] such passages are frequent:—

The versification.

"OSTES.

. . . . . .
A mort honteuse l'iray mettre,
Ains que je fine.

LA FILLE.

Alons nous esbatre, Esglantine,
Aval cest hostel un tentet;
Car le cuer et le corps si m'est
Pesant en vain.

LA DAMOISELLE.

Dame, vostre vouloir à plain
Soit fait! alons.

IIJe BOURGOIS.

Dieu mercy! tant ay des talons
. . . . . ."

This metrical variety in the *Miracles* is most generally found in the less serious portions, in the dialogues of serving-men, soldiers, workmen, and the like; and it

[1] *Hist. of French Lit.*, 5th edit., 1897, p. 96. [2] P. 454.

may have some historical value in explaining the involved forms of the more exclusive comedy of the *Farces*. In the English Miracles the prosody is also very varied, both in the kinds of stanza and in the treatment of the dialogue within the stanza,[1] and is more akin to that of the French *Miracles* than to that of their more natural analogue, the *Mystères*. It is remarkable that the studied attention to the conventional verse-forms should have increased with the growth of the popular and *bourgeois* sentiment in the drama. The phenomenon is but further proof that behind the spiritual restlessness of the transition there lies a positive endeavour to realise some principle of form; and, on the other hand, the presence of this technical purpose is emphatic evidence of the 'literary' origin of the so-called 'popular' type of drama and ballad.

[1] See Miss L. Toulmin Smith's *York Mystery Plays*, p. li, where she gives a 'sketch-analysis' of the metres of the York Cycle.

CHAPTER VIII.

THE DRAMA IN ENGLAND AND IN SCOTLAND.

COMPARISON WITH THE FRENCH — THE TERM "MIRACLE" — EARLY MIRACLES — INTERFERENCE OF THE GILDS — THE CYCLIC IDEA — 'THE HARROWING OF HELL'—THE FOUR GREAT CYCLES—THEIR INTERRELATION—THE COMIC AND ALLEGORICAL ELEMENTS—THE 'DIGBY MYSTERIES' — THE MORALITY — THREE TYPES: (A) THE 'PATERNOSTER,' 'CREED,' AND 'SACRAMENT' PLAYS; (B) THE 'CASTELL OF PERSEVERANCE,' ETC.; (C) THIRD TYPE: ITS CHARACTERISTICS — THE TERM "INTERLUDE" — LATER INFLUENCES — SKELTON'S PLAYS—THE CORNISH MIRACLES—THE DRAMA IN SCOTLAND — EARLY REFERENCES — CONSIDERATION OF DRAMATIC REMAINS OF DUNBAR AND LYNDSAY—THE 'DROICHIS PART OF THE PLAY'—THE 'SATYRE OF THE THRIE ESTAITIS.'

THE early English drama, though it illustrates in many respects the same progression of the dramatic idea as the French, does not show the elasticity or the rapidity of that development. The process of secularisation is slower; it is not till the fourteenth century, and hardly even then, that the writers of the English Miracles show courage to break with the strict traditions of Biblical story. The English drama did not take so kindly to the comic, but

Comparison with the French.

maintained, with one or two notable exceptions, a general tone of seriousness. Thus, while the allegorical style of the Morality soon became in the hands of the French players but a poor excuse for the humorous treatment of ordinary life, it never lost its didactic dulness in the northern drama. Characters like *Rex Humanitas* and *Gude Counsell* were so dear to their public as almost to exclude the more real figures like Pathelin or Phlipot. There is therefore some fitness in the fact that Scotland, which has shown the least dramatic bent of almost any nation, has produced, in Lyndsay's *Satire of the Thrie Estaitis*, the most complete, perhaps the best, single example of the early drama; and not the less fittingly in that form which is intrinsically the most undramatic. As a result of these limitations the early comedy of England does not stand in such close relationship to the Elizabethan comedy as the French comedy of the *Sots* and *Basochiens* does to the drama of Molière and his successors.

The name 'Mystery' was not applied to the religious drama in England; it is an academic refinement as modern as Dodsley's time. The usual term throughout is 'Miracle' or 'Miracle Play' (the wife of Bath speaks generally of "playes of miracles"), whether it refer to an authorised spectacle in a Church, or "a syght of synne" in "weyis and grenys," as described in the fourteenth-century *Handlyng Synne*. In France, in the fifteenth century, there was something of the same comprehensive use of the word *Mystère* for all varieties

The term **Miracle.**

of the religious drama. The Mystery triumphed in England too, but the old-fashioned name, which had been adopted at the introduction of the foreign *Miracles*, continued to be used long after it had become technically inappropriate.

The English drama dates, in a literary sense, from the close of the thirteenth century, immediately after the institution, by Papal authority, of the Festival of Corpus Christi.[1] Before that time all is conjecture. Of the Miracle of S. Katharine (*Ludus de S. Katharina*) played at Dunstable, *c.* 1110, as recorded by Matthew of Paris, we have no information; nor have we any details of the "repraesentationes miraculorum" which William Fitz-Stephen mentions as having been acted in London towards the close of that century. It would appear from a consideration of these and other stray facts that down to the dawn of the fourteenth century the religious drama in England was exotic, and was written and played by the clergy; and further, that such drama as was in vogue was entirely religious. Beyond a hint of the later Morality in the single plays of the Anglo-Norman Guillaume Herman (*d.* 1170) and Archbishop Langton,[2] there is no suspicion of any dramatic quality in the dull tale of post-Conquest literature.

Early Miracles.

In the early decades of the fourteenth century—after the confirmation of the institution of the Festival of Corpus Christi by the Council of Vienne (1311)

[1] *Ante*, p. 242, note.

[2] See Dr Ward's *Eng. Dram. Lit.* (2nd edit.), i. 105, &c.

—the English drama begins to show secular tendencies, and at the same time to become more national in character. The secularisation is less pronounced than in France, and, for a considerable period, is rather confined to the matters of representation than expressive of any serious change in the literary mood.

Interference of the Gilds.

The authorisation of the Corpus Christi ceremonies was the direct cause of the interference of the Gilds, whose enthusiasm to take part in the spectacles may be said to have both made and unmade the early popular drama in England. So great was the demand by the crafts to have a share in the presentation of the pageants that the episodes had to be cut and carved into small portions. Thus in the York plays the story of the Ark alone was entrusted to three crafts; the shipwrights saw to the making of the Ark, and the fishmongers (pessoners) and mariners, as experts in sea-matters, had charge of Noah and his company during their voyage on the waters.[1] Adaptation of this kind, which varied at each festival, in each cycle, and in each town, naturally told against the literary quality of the plays, even though in some cases it stimulated the copying of foreign versions and gave occasional opportunities for original treatment; and when, in the beginning of the fifteenth century, a less diffuse condition prevailed, the popular taste had already begun to turn to the Moralities and later forms. The most important effect of this interference of the Gilds, against which the clerical monopolists

[1] In the Chester Plays the matter of Noah is appropriately entrusted to the "water-leaders and drawers of Deey."

protested more loudly and for a longer time than they did in France, was the elaboration of the idea of the cycle in the religious drama. This may be said to be the chief individual or national characteristic of that drama in England. Not only does the main body of the plays resolve itself into great cycles, like the four about to be mentioned, but the Miracles, which stand apart from these, are, in most cases, but the scattered fragments of other cycles. To this latter category belong such as the Grocers' Play at Norwich (*Adam and Eve*), Parfre's Candlemas Play, and the Newcastle Shipwrights' Play of *The Building of the Ark*.[1] Though there are borrowings from the French, and though the ordering of the Chester series is obviously connected with the series of the *Vieil Testament*,[2] the persistent elaboration in England of cyclic plays was the direct outcome of the enthusiasm of the Gilds. So we may say that the religious drama in England in the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries was more popular than in France, in the sense that it was more fully the expression of *bourgeois* vanity and love of display; but less popular than the French in the literary sense of opposition to the pious traditions of the Middle Ages. The *Harrowing of Hell*, which is our oldest vernacular drama, is an isolated example, and is presumably earlier than the period of the activity of the Gilds.[3] Its subject is

The cyclic idea.

The Harrowing of Hell.

[1] See Dr Ward's *Eng. Dram. Lit.* (2nd edit.), i. 91, &c.

[2] *Ante*, p. 254.

[3] "Three extant manuscripts of it date from the reign of Edward II." (Pollard, *Eng. Miracle Plays*, xxi.) It extends to only 244 lines, and is printed in the appendix of Mr Pollard's volume.

treated again and again in the later series, but its form shows that it has not yet reached to even the rudimentary dramatic idea of the cyclic plays. As in the case of many of the early French pieces, we find it difficult to conclude that it was intended for representation; its general character, and the phrasing of the opening lines—

> "Alle herkneth to me now,
> A strif wille I tellen on"—

rather place it in the category of the non-dramatic *estrifs* of the thirteenth century, of which the *Owl and the Nightingale* is a familar English example. The case of the Brome Hall *Abraham and Isaac*,[1] of the fourteenth century, is different. Though it stands at present unconnected with any cycle, except as supplying the model to certain portions of the later Chester plays, both the episodical nature of its subject and its more developed form suggest the idea that it may yet be found to be the portion of some burst dramatic planet. There is much to be done in determining the interrelationship of our early religious plays, both the great cycles and the fragments; and such an examination will, I am convinced, emphasise their connected and cyclic character.

The great collections are the York Plays (*c.* 1340-50),[2] the Towneley (or Wakefield, or Woodkirk) Plays

[1] Ed. Toulmin Smith (*Anglia*, vii.)

[2] Ed. Toulmin Smith, 1885. There are 48 plays: earlier versions had as many as 57.

(*c.* 1350),[1] the Chester Plays (*c.* 1400),[2] and the Coventry Plays (*c.* 1400-50).[3] The subjects of each cycle being the Scriptural story from the Creation to the Judgment, it followed that there was a certain sameness in the handling of each series; but we find in this only a partial explanation of the close relationship between them. Their similarity, almost identity, is perhaps the most interesting fact, especially for our present purpose; individual literary merit is only occasional, and at its best is never better than what we find in the French Mysteries. If a general and inclusive proposition were necessary, it would be that the later cycles are founded on the earlier, and are dramatic renderings, on the model of the York cycle, of the material of the *Cursor Mundi*; that each is a medley of the work of different authors, presumably clerical; that all are Northern, or rather Anglian, in origin and influence; and that the matter of each is a peculiar English compound of Scriptural, Apocryphal, and legendary story. Objections may be reasonably raised to portions of this statement; as, with Dr Ward, that the bulk of the York Plays is "the work of a single hand";[4] or that Mr Pollard has yet to prove that the Coventry cycle arose in the Eastern Counties:[5] but even if they were

The Four Great Cycles.

Their interrelation.

[1] Ed. Surtees Society, 1836. There are 32 plays.

[2] Ed. Wright (Shakespeare Society, 1843-47) and partly by Deimling (E.E.T.S., Extra Series, 1892). There are 25 plays. They were performed at Whitsuntide, not, as were the others, at Corpus Christi.

[3] Ed. Halliwell (Shakespeare Society, 1841). There are 42 plays.

[4] *Eng. Dram. Lit.*, i. 66. [5] *Eng. Mir. Plays*, p. xxxviii.

sustained, they would not destroy the general evidence of interaction. The relationship of the cycles is interesting in another respect as showing an internal development of the comic spirit and of the principle of the later Morality, the former appearing first, then growing in vigour, then coming in contact with the latter, and ultimately yielding to it. Thus in the York Plays the humorous passages are less obtrusive than in the Towneley Plays, in episodes like that of the Shepherds and the sheep-stealer Mak or of Noah's family worries, though these, again, are as yet far removed from the rough tomfoolery of the early regular drama. In the Chester cycle, on the other hand, which contains both a Shepherds' pageant and an even more amusing display of the undutifulness of "Noyes Wiffe," the realistic narrative is already tinged with the didactic spirit of the Morality. In the *Sacrifice of Isaac* an Expositor gives the 'significacioun' of Abraham's "deed of devocion," and elsewhere acts, partly as monitor, partly as master of ceremonies, during the changing of the pageants. Most of the new material of this cycle, such as the play of *Ezekiel*, is essentially didactic, though exception must be made of the unique *Antichrist*, a *rechauffé* of the mediæval legends of the advent of the Great Enemy, which in its condensation of the older material is in striking analogy with the treatment of romantic tradition in the ballads. In the Coventry Plays the quality of the Morality is still more evident. The characters in the *Salutation and Conception* are Contemplacio (a Coventry render-

The comic and allegorical elements.

ing of the Chester Expositor), Veritas, Misericordia, Justicia, and Pax, who discourse in eight-lined stanzas, in this wise:—

"MISERICORDIA.
"Syster Ryghtwysnes, ye are to vengeabyl,
Endles synne God endles may restore,
Above alle hese werkys God is mercyabyl,
Thow he forsook God be synne, be feyth he forsook hym never the more.
And thow he presumyd nevyr so sore,
Ye must consyder the frelnes of mankende,
Lerne, and ye lyst, this is Goddys lore,
The mercy of God is withowtyn ende."

There is no dramatic intention in this stanzaic seriousness, though in the free use of abstract personages there is a hint of the later Morality. The comic is entirely absent; even Diabolus under his many aliases refuses to play the low comedian. The general conclusion is therefore that the Biblical matter of the English Miracle in its transition from the York to the Coventry cycle shows, despite the close connection of the versions, the increasing influence of the allegorical fancy of the age. But the English drama yielded more slowly than the French, and made less use of the additional minor characters, like Pincedès and Pille Mortier, whose presence saves the French from absolute dulness.

This approximation to the Morality is discernible in the smaller cycle of New Testament Plays known as the *Digby Mysteries*.[1] They are four in number (or

[1] Ed. Sharp (Abbotsford Club, 1835) and Furnivall (New Shakespeare Society, 1882, and E.E.T.S., 1896).

five, if we include an unnamed Morality), and seem to be fragments of other cycles. The collection is, as it were, an *olla* of the early drama. There is the *Mary Magdalene* (much the best of the series), which is, as we have seen, at once a Miracle, a Mystery, and a Morality; Parfre's Candlemas play, called *The Kyllynge of the Children*, and *The Conversion of St Paul* are reminiscent, in parts of the Chester Plays, in parts of the Coventry cycle; the *Burial and Resurrection* is a reversion to the earlier condition of the religious drama in what may be called, in Dr Ward's words, "its organic connexion with the liturgy of the Church;"[1] while the additional untitled fragment,[2] called by Dr Furnivall *A Morality of Wisdom, Who is Christ*, is a fair specimen of the pure English Morality. In these pieces, taken as a whole, there is a more vigorous strain of comedy and a little more of the French actuality in the 'moral' personages than there is in the Coventry types or the tiresome puppets of the English Morality proper. The Falstaffian *Watkyn* (in Parfre's Candlemas play), the 'stabularius' (in the *Conversion*), the "hethen preste and his boye," or the skipper (in *Mary Magdalene*) are dramatic beings of a different order from the Scriptural characters or the Seven Deadly Sins with whom they freely mix. The scanty indications of the lost Beverly cycle (*c.* 1400) and of the Newcastle cycle (*c.* 1420), of which only the *Noah's Ark* portion has been preserved, compel the

The Digby Mysteries.

[1] *Eng. Dram. Lit.*, i. 96.

[2] Part of one of the Macro Moralities (*infra*, p. 286).

conjecture that they followed the model of the York Plays and were direct offshoots from that cycle.

The Morality: The English Morality may be said to pass through three phases—not necessarily in chronological relationship—before it is merged in the composite beginning of the regular drama in the sixteenth century. Or, we may say that there are indications of dramatic movement in three directions. The first is illustrated in plays of the *Paternoster* type, the second in the *Castle of Perseverance*, and the third in *Hycke-Scorner*, with the *Four Elements* as a later sub-variety.

Three types:

(a) *The* Paternoster, Creed, *and* Sacrament *Plays.* The texts of the *Paternoster* play, which was most probably written in York early in the fourteenth century, and the *Creed Play*, also a York piece, perhaps of the early fifteenth century, are unfortunately not extant, though we have some notes of the contents of the former. But we have the Croxton play of the *Sacrament*, which belongs to the late fifteenth century.[1] All are, in a sense, Miracles, in so far as they proclaim the miraculous power of the Lord's Prayer, the Creed, or the Host in thwarting the onslaught of God's enemies; but they are essentially Moralities in that they have plots which are original or uncanonical, that they freely introduce abstract and new characters, and that, generally, they have more of that human directness which we have already noted in the Digby Mysteries.

The earliest extant Morality is the *Castell of*

[1] Ed. Whitley Stokes (Philological Society, 1880-81).

Perseverance, which is preserved as a companion piece to *Wisdom, Who is Christ* (otherwise, *Mind, Will, and Understanding*), and *Mankind* in the so-called Macro Moralities.[1] These and *Everyman* (*c.* 1475-1500),[2] *The World and the Child*, and *Nature* represent the truest form of the English Morality. Unlike the *Paternoster* type or the *Hycke-Scorner* type they are concerned not with an episode or an example but with the more general interests of humanity in its conflict with the True and False. The strife of the Good and the Bad Angel in the *Mary Magdalene* has a limited purpose; in the *Castell of Perseverance* it is symbolic of the unending struggle of every soul.

(*b*) *The* Castell of Perseverance, *&c.*

> "God hym yevyth two aungel ful yep and ful yare,
> The good aungel and the badde to hym for to lende;
> . . . . . .
> And God hathe gevyn man fre arbitracion
> Whether he wyl hym[self] save hy[s soul?]."

This form of the Morality is, therefore, in dignity of purpose, the analogue of the English Miracle, which is concerned with the complete story of mankind's redemption. If not exactly a 'religious' drama, it is a theological drama, and it bears a further likeness to the Scriptural Mystery in its great length and in its readiness (as in the play, *Wisdom, Who*

[1] See Pollard, *Eng. Miracle Plays*, p. xlviii. Part of *Perseverance* is printed in that volume (pp. xlv. and 64-76).

[2] Ed. Logeman, Gand, 1892, who has shown that it is a translation of the Dutch play *Elckerlijk*. See also Pollard, *u.s.*, p. 202. Dr Ward retains his view that the Dutch play is a version of *Everyman* (*Eng. Dram. Lit.*, 2nd edit., i. 120).

is Christ) to make use of elaborate spectacle and pageantry. Though quite of its age in respect of its strong allegorical tone, this Morality is, we might say, retrogressive in its exclusion of the comic and actual. It is concerned with the actions of Humanum Genus, Mundus, New-Gyse, Everyman, Good-dedes, and is dedicated to high seriousness. In *Everyman* Death, God's "mighty messengere," who rates negligent man—

> "Everyman, stande styll. Whyder arte thou goynge,
> Thus gayle? hast thou thy Maker forgete?"—

is the selfsame fiend which, conjured up in dreams, had become the active terror of the century in its waking thoughts. There are minor touches of actuality, as in the late *World and the Child*, where 'Folye' is said to be a native of Holborn; but 'Folye' in that piece and in *Nature* plays a very dignified part, and does not condescend to that lower humour for which the caps and bells might have been an excuse. There seems to be no desire for a relaxation of the solemn purpose. The *Vice*, whose pranks became indispensable to the later popular drama, has no rôle in these plays.[1]

(c) *Third type: its characteristics.*

In the third phase of the Morality the literary intention is modified in two main ways. In the first place, the secularisation is emphasised; the interest tends to pass from a general philosophy of life as commended by Christian doctrine and illustrated by the actions and

[1] See Pollard, *u.s.*, p. liii, n.

sayings of uncanonical characters, to the more ordinary problems bearing on conduct, and ultimately to such topics as the praise of knowledge. It is the difference between the sermon and the homily, between Christianised philosophy and workaday wisdom. The characters, instead of being created to carry out a fixed moral design, are more and more drawn from real life, and, assuming certain allegorical and traditional manners, work out the moral lesson. In the second place, the conception is specialised, and the scale of treatment reduced. The plays are shorter and the characters in each are less numerous. This curtailment is the more important factor in the formation of the later Morality, and gives a strong impetus to the secular tendency; for when an episode or fragment is selected, as in the *Magdalene* of the later Miracles or the *Paternoster* of the first Moralities, a more elaborate plot is required, and the writer is forced back on his own ingenuity and on common experience. The outcome of this specialisation is that the Morality assumes an *occasional* character, showing more and more a desire to express special circumstances and ideas and to amuse rather than to teach. It is true that the plain didactic play continued for a long period, even after the advanced Morality was itself lost in the regular drama, but it lived merely as a convention. The name Interlude which is applied in a loose fashion to the third kind of Morality is itself suggestive. It was used early of pieces which served an occasional purpose at an entertainment, like the *Interludium de clerico*

The term Interlude.

et puella (temp. Edw. I.),[1] the only extant English specimen of that kind, and it is not strictly applicable to anything before the time of John Heywood,[2] who bridged the gap between the Morality and the true secular drama; yet it rightly indicates the common quality of all the pieces so-called, namely, a perception, through an essentially secular medium, of artistic enjoyment. The sense of dramatic pleasure is stimulated by the comic spirit, as in France; but the English plays never reach the humorous excellence of the best *farces* and *sotties*, and, perhaps because of their slower wit, are less prone to that debauchery of burlesque in which fifteenth-century France paid off old scores with the pietism of the Middle Ages. As in France, too, the Morality was tinged in due course by the politics and theology of the Reformation, and showed a tendency to return to didactic allegory, which, however useful as an aid to disputation, was from the point of view of pure art a sheer retrogression. Pieces like *Lusty Juventus* (*c.* 1550) might have been less dull had the early English drama had more than a pedant's interest in the problems of the Reformation, but they must have failed in fulfilment of the crude promise in the conception of Hycke-Scorner, fresh from his journeying in the land of Rumbelowe "thre myl out of hel."[3] And little more can be said of that subvariety which chose to be dull by finding its *dramatis personae* in the abstract ideas of the young Renaissance:

Later influences.

[1] *Reliquiae Antiquae*, I. 145.

[2] ?1497–?1580.

[3] Dodsley, ed. Hazlitt, vol. i.

as in *The Nature of the Four Elements* (*c.* 1517),[1] whose astronomy and philosophy must have bewildered the good vulgar, if it was ever acted or read beyond the walls of a college. The affectation of the new ideas was detrimental to the dramatic vigour of the later Morality. It makes the strife of Ignorance and Knowledge as wearisome as the familiar stage-war between the Virtues and the Vices. This is certainly the case in Skelton's dramatic work. His lost plays, *Vertu*, *Achademios*, and *Nigromansir*, may be suspected, from their titles, of being of the type of *The Four Elements*; his *Magnyfycence* (*c.* 1520) is certainly an example of the new wine of the Renaissance in the old dramatic bottles. Lines like those uttered by Fancy—

Skelton's plays.

> "Nay, he that ye sent us, Clokyd Colusyon,
> And your payntyd Pleasure, Courtly Abusyon,
> And your demenour with Counterfet Countenaunce,
> And your survayour, Crafty Conveyaunce,
> Or ever we were ware brought us in adversyte
> And hath robbyd you quyte from all felycyte"—

are decidedly reactionary, and show the dangers which beset the early sixteenth century as long as it was blind to the fact that the modern spirit, however imperfectly understood, demanded more of reality and less of metaphor.

The Miracle-plays which are extant in the Cornish tongue, in two texts in the Bodleian Library,[2] follow

[1] Dodsley, ed. Hazlitt, vol. ii.

[2] One of the texts is edited and translated by Mr Edwin Norris, 2 vols., Oxford, 1859.

the traditional methods of the early European Drama, but show, as might be expected, closer connection with the English models by the presence of the cyclic idea. There are three plays — an *Origo Mundi*, a *Passion*, and a *Resurrection*. In the last a separate piece on the *Death of Pilate* is introduced.[1] The text translated by Mr Norris is of the fifteenth century, and he thinks the original cannot be older than the fourteenth century. These pieces have the additional interest of being the chief, almost the only, remains of the literature of Cornwall.

The Cornish Miracles.

It seems paradoxical to turn to Scotland for the best work in the early drama, in face of the notorious fact that she was not, perhaps is not, a play-loving country, and that in the long history of the later drama she can show nothing better than the unoriginal *Monarchicke Tragedies* or *Douglas*. *Prima facie* there is no reason why Scotland before the Reformation should have been less fond of pageants and moralities than was a single city like York. The process of dispersion of the English Miracle plays from East Anglia to the north and north-west could hardly have stopped in Lancashire or at Newcastle, and Scotland must have been influenced as far north as Aberdeen, even if she did not produce any dramatic literature of her own. The evidence is however almost entirely circumstantial. A Mystery of *The Halie Blude* is said to have been acted on Windmillhill in Aberdeen in 1440; and a Candlemas play, the

The drama in Scotland.

[1] Vol. ii. p. 121.

Offerand of our Lady, and Corpus Christi plays seem to have been performed there,[1] at times between 1442 and 1531.[2] Buchanan is probably historically accurate in stating that in the reign of James I. plays of the Passion were acted by the clergy; but of these plays and their more elaborate successors we are ignorant. All the references in public documents to entertainments at royal progresses and fêtes seem to be to the more spectacular forms of the drama, corresponding to the English pageant proper and the later Masque. In a poem on the Queen's Marriage to the Dauphin (1558) we read—

Early references.

> "All burrowstownis, everilk man yow prayis
> To maik bainfyris, fairseis, and clerk-playis,
> And, throw your rewis, carrel dans, and sing:
> And at your croce gar wyn rin sindrie ways;
> As wes the custome in our alderis dayis;"[3]—

from which it would appear that the 'clerk-plays' only added variety to the general jollification, and made small claim on the public attention, as the great cycles did in England at Corpus Christi and Whitsuntide. The survival of the two very notable dramatic pieces—*The Droichis Part of the Play*, and *Ane Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis*—is no disproof of the traditional view that the early Scottish genius did not take kindly to the dramatic form. Not only are they the first and the last of the early drama, and almost contemporary,

[1] See the authorities in Irving's *Scottish Poetry*, p. 364.
[2] Aberdeen Council Register (Spalding Club), 1844.
[3] Pinkerton, *Ancient Scottish Poems*, ii. 284.

but they are the work of two of the greatest Scottish poets.[1] In England the best plays are by unknown or very minor writers, and in France the drama from *Pathelin* downwards attracted no greater wits than the Grebans and Mercadés. The Scottish pieces would therefore prove rather the literary versatility of Dunbar and Lyndsay than that these poets applied themselves to please a prevalent taste, even though there are indications in both pieces that the poets were only stimulating, and not creating, that taste. The remains may for this reason be considered as exceptional, and as worthy of our attention for their individual literary merit.

Consideration of dramatic remains of Dunbar and Lyndsay.

The *Droichis Part of the Play* (before 1513)[2] is a short piece in monologue. It is called "ane littill Interlud," and it is probably a fragment of a dramatic entertainment, perhaps the 'banis' or prologue. Some consider it autobiographic, from a comparison with the personalities of the *Flyting*. If it was Dunbar's own rôle in some Edinburgh festivity, we could have no stronger proof of his peculiar humour than in the representation of his dwarfish self by the character of 'Welth,' the offspring, in the direct line, of Fyn Mac Kowle, Gog Magog, and "mekle Gow Mackmorne." Whether this be true or not, the 'Interlude' bears the stamp of Dunbar's genius in every line—in the

The Droichis Part of the Play.

[1] Both belong, in strict chronology, to the early sixteenth century.

[2] Ed. Scot. Text Soc. (*Dunbar*, ii. 314); Schipper (*Dunbar's Poems*, p. 190).

vigour of phrase and rhythm, in the humour, grotesque fancy, and coarseness. Of Fyn we read—

"He gat my grauntschir Gog Magog;
Ay quhen he dansit, the warld wald schog;
Five thousand ellis ȝeid in his frog
Of Hieland pladdis, and mair.

Ȝit he was bot of tendir ȝouth;
Bot eftir he grewe mekle at fouth,
Ellevyne myle wyde met was his mouth,
His teith was ten ell sqwair.
He wald apon his tais stand,
And tak the sternis doune with his hand
And set tham in a gold garland
Above his wyfis hair" (ll. 37-48).

The more gorgeous Gargantua, who required but "nine hundred ells of Chasteleraud linen, and two hundred for gussets" for his shirt, and "eight hundred and thirteen ells of white satin" for his doublet, must have admired his Ossianic neighbour had he heard of him. And it is doubtful whether the ever-excellent Rabelais had the poetic fancy which added the conceit of the tiara of stars. There is plenty of that topsy-turvy mystical humour which some in compliment call Celtic, but the piece is never too literary for the plain man who clamoured for sheer fun and reality.[1]

Though Lyndsay's *Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis* (before 1539)[2] is a political Morality full of the heat of Protestantism, it has much of the enduring quality of pure literature. So thought an early copyist, who

[1] The Dwarf's Titanic coarseness has something of a parallel in the *Gyre-Carling* (*ante*, p. 77).

[2] In Laing's edition of Lyndsay, 3 vols., 1879.

explained his expurgated texts as "levand the grave mater thareof, becaus the samyne abuse is weill reformit in Scotland, praysit be God." Yet even in the polemical portions, which are directed rather against vice than against the Old Church, there is a fresh vigour and a dramatic insight which is rare in the sixteenth-century Moralities. The *Satyre* is a very long play, in two parts, with three interludes and a large number of personages; yet it is never wearisome or confused. Its strength lies in its variety, in its remarkable literary gamut. So coarse in places that even antiquaries have had recourse to asterisks, it yet reaches to heights of poetic beauty and impassioned rhetoric to which I know no parallel in the early drama and but few rivals in early literature. There is not much danger of overpraising the *Satyre* when one comes fresh from the *Castle of Perseverance* and its fellows, and when one recalls the impression of much of Lyndsay's other work; but, if proof were wanted, I should select portions of the speech of Veritie on her entry in the First Part, or of her Invocation, with its Miltonic strain—

The Satyre of the Thrie Estaitis.

"Get up, thow sleipis all too lang, O Lord";

or the opening words of Dame Chastitie in the Interlude of the Sowtar and the Taylor—

"Ye men of craft of greit ingyne,
Gif me harbrie, for Christis pyne,
And win God's bennesone and myne,
And help my hungrie hart."

To literary quality of this kind Lyndsay adds undoubted dramatic art in the arrangement of the situations, in the management of the dialogue—as in the one-lined passage between Rex Humanitas and Johne the Common-Weill, or in the transition by Veritie to a matter-of-fact style when, after praying for God's vengeance, she turns to her accusers—and, above all, in the delineation of the characters. Spiritualitie, Placebo, and the like have little of the indefiniteness of Skelton's abstractions, and are only a little less real than the Pardoner and his boy Wilkin, or the Taylor's Wife. Touches of realism and genuine comedy—such as the Abbot's account of his family, or the Sowtar's wife's dread of the frogs when she is wading through the ford, or Pauper's impudent invasion of the royal seat, or Folie's sermon—sparkle on every page. They are not inserted to relieve the heaviness of the moral; they are the nerves and tissue of the drama itself.

CHAPTER IX.

THE DRAMA IN THE PENINSULAS; AND IN GERMANY.

THE ITALIAN CONDITIONS—THE SECULAR ELEMENT—SPECTACLE AND MUSIC—THE RISE OF THE "RAPPRESENTAZIONI"—THEIR LIMITATIONS—CONTRARY INFLUENCES—LORENZO DE' MEDICI—POLITIAN'S 'ORFEO'—BOIARDO'S 'TIMONE'—THE EARLY SPANISH DRAMA—THE 'MISTERIO DE LOS REYES MAGOS'—GENERAL RELIGIOUS TONE—PSEUDO-DRAMATIC MATERIAL—CHARACTERISTICS OF THE WORK OF MANRIQUE AND ENCINA—THE EARLY GERMAN DRAMA—THE 'TEN VIRGINS'—'FRAU JUTTA'—THE "TEUFELSPIEL"—THE "FASTNACHTSPIELE"—ROSENBLÜT, FOLZ, AND ROSENSTOCK—CLASSICAL INFLUENCE.

The Italian conditions.

In Italy, as in Scotland, the drama was dwarfed in accomplishment, and, in its earlier period at least, did not show even the promise of Lyndsay's effort. For though there are thousands of Italian plays from the first days of the 'Rappresentazioni' to the time of Alfieri, it would be hard to point to any one which expresses the sentiment of national art such as is found in the work of Gil Vicente, Shakespeare, or Molière. That Italian and Scottish history was so full of dramatic interest perhaps militated against, rather than inspired, the rise of

a vigorous national drama. Whatever might have been its ultimate development, it was blighted in its beginnings by the New Spirit — in the South, by the affectation of Humanism, in the North, by the distraction of religious criticism. The peculiarly disjointed political condition of Italy may have been responsible for the atrophy, yet it could not have prevented the growth of a strong drama in one or all varieties, with the ultimate domination of one, had other circumstances been favourable. The 'Sacra Rappresentazione' was almost exclusively a Tuscan effort; its weakness was not caused by the fact that Florence had no common literary purpose with Ferrara or Milan, or they with Florence. The failure of Tuscany, the literary dictator of Italy, to reach even to mediocrity in dramatic composition forces us to look for the cause in those qualities of race and genius which we may accept but cannot fully explain. The idyllic character of the people, their lack of the feeling for romance,[1] and the Humanistic indifference, were strong to counteract the hopes of a national drama: even the realism of *bourgeois* fancy, from which French comedy drew all that has made it immortal, found its expression in Italy in the arm-chair subtleties of the followers of Boccaccio and Sacchetti.

The early Italian drama has little in common with the early English: with the early French it has perhaps two points of agreement. The first is, that the secular influence, in the writing and management of

[1] *Ante*, p. 136.

the drama, is observable from the earliest period, outside the practice of the liturgical play proper. It is not, however, so strongly secular in idea as it was in France, for, though the early fraternities were lay, their subjects had always the ecstatic *timbre* of Jacopone's work. In the second place, the plays are all individual efforts, and are not, as in England, subordinated to the idea of the cycle.[1] The French religious plays, despite the notable example of the *Vieil Testament*, inclined, as we have seen, to this treatment by units. The unlikeness to both the French and English is emphasised by the lack of the comic spirit. It does not appear, even apologetically, in the later religious drama; and its use on the profane stage is always half-hearted. If there is anything distinctive about the early Italian drama it is its extreme fondness for spectacular display and for musical accompaniment. The luxurious and fantastic life at the great and petty courts of Italy had established a popular taste for pageantry during the Middle Ages, and the new-found pleasures of the Renaissance stimulated this liking for triumphs, processions, and carnival fêtes. The musical element was more important than the scenic, even from the very first. Both tastes were anti-literary and disastrous to

The secular element.

Spectacle and music.

[1] An exception is the Latin *Ludus Christi*, performed by the clergy outside the Church of Cividale (Friuli), quoted from Muratori by Mr Symonds (iv. 267); yet it deals with but a portion of New Testament story, and is a long way from the cyclic idea of the Redemption elaborated by the English Gilds, even in the Coventry plays. The episodes might well be considered as scenes of one dramatic action.

the true development of the drama. The second prevailed, and produced, through the medium of the pastoral play, the Opera, which is Italy's national drama; but neither it nor the *al fresco* splendours of the classical age and the buffooneries of Scaramouche are an adequate counterpart to the passion of the Globe Theatre or the wit of the Palais-royal.

The rise of the Rappresentazioni.

Though the Italian drama was thus blighted in its later growth by causes partly internal and partly external, it started with prospects as good as those of its neighbours. Others were didactic; the Italian was emotional. Both were interested in the subject of the Passion: the French and English to tell the story and to convey the lesson, the Italian to feel the fervours of adoration or the sorrows of Gethsemane. The early Southern drama is the inheritor of the spirit of the Lauds, of societies such as the "Disciplinati di Gesù Cristo," but more immediately of the exuberant hymn-writing of the early fourteenth century. Jacopone da Todi (*c.* 1230-1306), the most vehement of the ecstatic 'Laudesi,' has left one piece, *La Crocifissione*,[1] which is dramatic in quality and is clearly the inspiration of the 'Rappresentazioni' of the fifteenth century. It is a short dialogue between a Messenger, Mary, Christ, and the Jewish mob. Mary's language is a paroxysm of maternal sorrow—

"O figlio, figlio, figlio,
Figlio, amoroso giglio,

[1] A. D'Ancona e O. Bacci, *Manuale*, i. 77.

Figlio, chi dà consiglio
Al cor mio angustiato !
Figlio, occhi giocundi,
Figlio, co' non respundi ?
Figlio, perchè t' ascundi
Dal petto o' se' lattato ?"

Yet the subjective language of the 'corrotto' was a less satisfactory apprenticeship for a dramatic literature than the matter-of-fact details and coarse comedy of the English and French.

When the principle of the Lauds passed in the fourteenth century into the forms known as the 'Divozioni,' certain changes had taken place or were in process. The narrow limit of the subject of the early pious societies was broken, and other matters than the story of the Passion were included; and, secondly, the different parts or speeches, like those of Mary, Christ, or the Messenger in Jacopone's piece, were allocated to separate actors.[1] It seems obvious that this modification of the Lauds ultimately led to the development of the more specific 'Rappresentazioni' which were popular in Florence. The stronger spectacular character of these plays has been explained by the elaborate public ceremonies of the Florentine Feast of S. John,[2] whose extravagant shows and mechanical ingenuities were the marvel

[1] See the interesting note in Symonds's *Renaissance* (iv. Append. iv.) where the suggestion is made that the separation had a musical origin, the different parts being given to appropriate voices—soprano, bass, and tenor.

[2] By Signor D'Ancona in his *Origini de Teatro Italiano*, Turin, 1891. An English account will be found in Symonds, iv. 257 *et seq.*

of their age. The period of their popularity falls between the middle of the fifteenth century and probably the second decade of the sixteenth. The *Abramo ed Isac* of Feo Belcari, which was performed in 1449, is the first 'Sacra Rappresentazione' of which we have the certain date. To the familiar subjects such as the *Natività*, the *Passione*, *S. Maddalena*, or the *Figliuol Prodigo* are added the stories of special saints like *S. Barbara* or *S. Feodora*, and a number of apocryphal and legendary pieces like *Barlaam e Josafat*, *S. Uliva* (which retells the immortal story of the patient Griselda), or mere *novelle* of unlucky pilgrims or wicked Jews, in which poetic justice comes as the direct act of Providence.[1]

The 'Sacre Rappresentazioni' were a slower growth than the French Mysteries or the English Miracles, and they never reached their level of development. The idea of the Morality proper is found but rarely, as in the *Commedia Spirituale dell' Anima*, which, though extant in a sixtenth-century guise, is probably older,[2] or, again, to a certain extent in Boiardo's *Timone*. This fact would have been the more remarkable in the history of a country and literature which were strongly predisposed to the allegorical and mystical, had not the

Their limitations.

[1] See Signor D'Ancona's *Sacre Rappresentazioni*, 3 vols., Florence, 1872, &c. A summary of some of the texts is given in Symonds, iv. 288, &c. The titles *Mistero*, *Miraculo*, *Festa*, *Figura*, *Storia*, *Esempio*, &c., are used somewhat indifferently in the more particular description of these *Sacre Rappresentazioni*.

[2] De Sanctis, *Storia della Letteratura Italiana*, i. v.

earlier phases of dramatic development been so tardy, and had not the avalanche of the Renaissance been so imminent. The general impression derived from these pieces, as collected in Signor D'Ancona's volumes, is that they are unspontaneous and juvenile. They follow pious tradition with the painful care of the child, not of the theological rigorist. How far this simplicity was a mere affectation, sadly at variance with the cynical indifference of the century, need not be discussed; it suffices to note that it disappeared when neo-paganism rose to its power. And had the early Italian drama less studiously eschewed the comic as an indecency, it might have been saved, as was the English and French, from the disaster which such an upheaval as the Renaissance inevitably brought; but it started on its new career of classicism lacking in the experience of humour and capable only of satire or irony. The dramatic treatment is, with rare exceptions, ineffectual, and the management of the personages shows little of the variety which characterises the North in the actions of the stock Biblical characters. The apologetic use of sketches from common life, in the style of the Interludes, is even more remarkable. This is partly explained, as Mr Symonds has pointed out, by the fact that the 'Rappresentazioni' were "the growth of more refined conditions."[1] Yet we must remember that even in the full tide of Renaissance culture there was a fashion of revelling at times in vulgarities of language and topic, and that there was ready to hand the tradition of the improvised comedy which had

[1] *Renaissance*, iv. 289.

descended from Roman times. It is reasonable to believe that the lack of elasticity in that *genre*, shown later in the conventional masks of the 'Commedia dell' Arte,' was not entirely due to a blind copying of the tricks of the Roman stage which came with the domination of Plautus and Terence in the fifteenth and sixteenth centuries. Over and above this structural weakness in the 'Sacre Rappresentazioni' is their poor literary quality, the result not so much of incompetence as of neglect. The artistic mob desired music (in lyrical interludes), pantomime, and spectacle, and suppressed the poet in doing honour to the *ingegnieri* and *festajuoli*. There were a few forces, which, had they been less isolated, might have helped to save the drama from its depression. The vigorous gag of the improvised popular pieces might have proved a helpful instrument; and the advance in the use of secular legend in the later 'Rappresentazioni' was a hopeful sign. But these came to nothing: so too did the promise of a true comedy in occasional pieces like the farce of the idle and industrious apprentices appended to the *Rappresentazione di un Pellegrino*.[1] The dramatic intention in the *Tre Pellegrini* or *S. Uliva* is quite exceptional. It may be said that the early drama met disaster through the very forces on which it most relied. The love of music and spectacle, which gave it its popularity in its own day, and the interest of culture, which appeared to offer a helping hand, alike aided in effecting its overthrow—on the one hand,

[1] Symonds, *Renaissance*, iv. 294, n.

in the musical and painted triumphs of the Court of Ferrara of the first decade of the sixteenth century, and, on the other hand, in the translations and adaptations of the Latin comedies. In the first, literary art was but an additional and almost unnecessary grace; in the second, the condescension to the vulgar manner of the Florentine 'Feste,' much less to that of the Neapolitan 'Farse,' was not to be tolerated by the intellectual fine gentlemen, except when occasion allowed the Lorenzos and Politians to discard their finery and to masquerade with their tradesmen and countryfolk. Their delight to search, in these moments of relaxation, for new artistic pleasures in the most alien phases of life and through the medium of dialect and *gergo*, shows how much they, like some writers in our own day, had miscalculated the literary requirements of their age. A stronger rebel than Aretino, even had he come half a century earlier, could not have revived the lifeless drama.

Contrary influences.

The dramatic work of the three greater writers, Lorenzo de' Medici, Politian, and Boiardo, illustrates the leading tendencies at the close of the century. Lorenzo's temperament inclined him, as we have already seen, to the picturesque and emotional expression of ideas. His dramatic capability was extremely limited. His *Canti carnascialeschi* are a wonderful medley of colour and motion, a revelry of sense; his *Laudi spirituali* are the mere exaltation of a man, who, like his age, took religion as a mood. He never reaches beyond the blunt dramatic art of his *San*

Lorenzo de Medici.

Giovanni e Paolo,[1] in which he follows the canons of the 'Sacre Rappresentazioni.' Politian has left the *Favola di Orfeo*, which, through the ingenuity of editors, has assumed a more classical character than it originally possessed. In the form in which it was first recited at Mantua in 1471, in honour of Duke Galeazzo Sforza, it differs but slightly from the ordinary 'Rappresentazioni,' whether metrically (in the frequent use of the *ottava rima*) or in its arrangement by tableaux rather than by actions; but it shows, by its choice of a classical subject, that, like *S. Uliva* and other pieces, it was taking the colour of the pagan Renaissance. Its higher literary quality separates it from the dull average of the Biblical and legendary plays. The more familiar form in which it is still printed, as a tragedy in five acts, with a re-arrangement of the *dramatis personae*, was the ingenious device of the learned Affò, as late as 1766.[2] Boiardo's *Timone* (*c.* 1487), on the other hand, connects itself with the coming phase of the drama rather than with the old. It is a comedy in five acts, in *terza rima*, founded on a dialogue by Lucian, and it strives, in an impotent way, to realise the principle of the regular drama. In some respects it reminds us of the English Morality, with its allegorical personages, and with Athenians instead of English cits; and in its representation it preserved the unclassical tradition of a double

Politian's Orfeo.

Boiardo's Timone.

[1] Performed in 1489.

[2] Entitled in order, *Pastorale*, *Ninfale*, *Eroico*, *Negromantico*, *Baccanale*. See the edition referred to *ante*, p. 133.

platform for the proper separation of the mortals and immortals.[1] Yet the intention of this piece is classical, and it points the way to Cammelli's five-act tragedy of *Filostrato e Panfila* (performed in Mantua in 1499), from which there is an easy step to Trissino's *Sofonisba* (1515), the first regular tragedy. A parallel course in comedy lies between Niccolò da Correggio's *Cefalo* (1487), a nondescript pastoral with many of the features of the 'Sacre Rappresentazioni,' and Dovizio's (Cardinal Bibbiena's) Italian transcript of the *Menaechmi* in his notorious *Calandra*, written in the first decade of the sixteenth century.

The early Spanish drama.

The extant material of the early Spanish drama is very small in bulk, though the contrary would seem to be the fact if we accept a generous tradition of the historians. We have the extreme estimate in Klein's *Geschichte des Spanischen Dramas*, a sheer case of apoplectic erudition, which well illustrates the danger of going afield and gathering in details which may have only the flimsiest connection with the thesis in hand. The dramatic character of such forms as the dialogue or *estrif*, or of pictorial pieces like the *Danza de la Muerte*, is extremely superficial. There is no end to the matter, and, it would appear, no beginning to the drama, if the literary Owls and Nightingales make plays of their quarrels, or if every patch of picturesque rhetoric is a pageant in disguise.

The origin and earlier phases of the Spanish drama,

[1] See the interesting note in Symonds, *Renaissance*, v. 95.

as of the others, were liturgical; and the oldest extant example belongs, as in other literatures, to the close of the twelfth century. Some have given a much earlier date to the incomplete *Misterio de los Reyes Magos*, which deals with the story of the journey of the three Magi, Melchior, Baltasar, and Gaspar, but the consideration of its obvious connection with the Latin drama of France is against such a view.[1] And further, as Mr Fitzmaurice-Kelly has pointed out, its "freer treatment of the liturgy" and its "swiftness of action" are arguments against its ascription to a more remote period.[2] It is, at all events, the only piece which is older than the fifteenth century. Nothing between it and the work of Gómez Manrique (1412-1491) has been preserved. There are hints of plays, at least of spectacles, in the Chronicles; and it is safe to assume that the religious drama was regularly cultivated. The dramatic insight of the *Reyes Magos* and the strong religious bent of the drama of the Golden Age are circumstantial evidence that in the intervening period there must have been some continuous interest in the religious drama. It is probable, too, that on the secular side there were, at least in the early fourteenth century, examples of the type of the Morality as well as of the ordinary spectacle or pageant — earlier forms, in fact, of

The Misterio de los Reyes Magos.

[1] See the *Jahrbuch für romanische und englische Literatur* (xii.), 1871: also Amador de los Rios, *Historia critica de la lit. esp.*, iii.

[2] See Mr Fitzmaurice-Kelly's *Spanish Literature* (pp. 44-46) for a discussion of its historical position.

the popular 'entremeses' and 'momos.' In the quaint thirteenth-century code of Alfonso the Tenth the clergy are forbidden to countenance the profanities of the *juegos por escarnio*, just as elsewhere throughout Europe the Church had been warned of the secular tendencies in popular plays. The growth of these tendencies must have been by a process exactly analogous to what took place beyond the Pyrenees, though perhaps more limited in extent on account of the constitutional religious seriousness of the Spaniards.

General religious tone.

Such dramatic advance as is to be noted in the fifteenth century is found in the work of two writers, Gómez Manrique[1] and Juan del Encina (1468-1534). Beyond what they have left, there is nothing extant which is genuinely dramatic or of sufficient importance. The satirical *Coplas de Mingo Revulgo*, referred to in an earlier chapter, has really no claim to be considered dramatic, though it undoubtedly influenced Encina; and the vigorous *Diálogo entre el Amor y un Viejo*,[2] though showing considerable dramatic intention, cannot be called a drama even in the loosest sense. And the later and more notorious *Celestina*, which was called a tragi-comedy, and sometimes a prose drama, must be excluded from the category. It had some influence on the sixteenth-century theatre, but in a much more remarkable way on the prose romance.

Pseudo-dramatic material.

There are two characteristics, common to both

[1] *Ante*, p. 162.

[2] *Ante*, p. 164.

Characteristics of the work of Manrique and Encina.

Manrique's and Encina's work; one, we might say, peculiarly Spanish, the other essentially Southern. The first is the double interest in the religious and profane drama which is so remarkable in the age of the great dramatists. Elsewhere the process was one of secularisation, the gradual decay or transformation of the liturgical play by the forces of popular realism and especially of *bourgeois* comedy. In Spain, on the other hand, the original *motif* which dictated the Mystery of the Three Magi never lost its vitality, and it inspired, at the remove of several centuries, the series of pious plays which culminated in Calderon's 'Autos sacramentales.' Of Manrique's two extant plays one is a *Representación del Nacimiento de Nuestro Señor*, in which the story of the Nativity is told in dialogue by Mary, Joseph, the shepherds, and the angels; the other is a birthday mime in honour of a royal patron. Encina's 'Representaciónes' or 'Églogas' (not 'eclogues' in the strict sense) illustrate both moods in almost equal proportions. Some are simple Mysteries of the Nativity, Passion, and Resurrection; others are secular in tone, like the *Aucto*[1] *del Repelón*, which finds its subject in a street row in Salamanca between shepherds and gownsmen, or like the *Égloga de Fileno*, which deals with the desperate love of a swain for his cruel mistress. The second point is that the early Spanish drama had, like the Italian, a musical basis. It is safe to assume from the metrical repetition in Man-

[1] *Auto* or *aucto* (*actus*) was not as yet confined to the strict religious idea which is expressed in the later 'Autos sacramentales.'

rique's *Representación* that it was written to be sung or chanted by the nuns for whom it was composed. Encina, who was a musician of considerable repute and has left accompaniments to much of his own dramatic and lyrical verse, introduces song and dance freely in his 'Eclogues,' generally in the form of the 'villancico.' The same is done in the religious plays of his junior, Lucas Fernández. This characteristic persisted throughout the history of the Spanish theatre, especially in all pieces of the kind called 'entremeses,' but it never reached the technical development of the Italian Opera. Encina was probably influenced by Italian methods, as he seems to have been in his choice of literary material in his *Plácida y Victoriano.* There is a Spanish tradition that the theatre as a public institution dates from the memorable year 1492, when Columbus discovered America, and that Encina's plays were the first to amuse and edify the Castilians. These plays and others for a time were probably within the reach of only the special coteries and aristocratic circles of the kingdom; the common folks still found their enjoyment in the forgotten 'autos' of the churches and market-places. Yet the success of Encina in high places and the rapid succession of colleagues and imitators like Torres Naharro and the Portuguese Gil Vicente broadened and fixed the dramatic taste.[1]

The early German drama follows on the lines on which the French was developed, passing from the

[1] See Mr Hannay's *Later Renaissance*, chap. iii.

purely liturgical forms, in Latin, in German and Latin, and, later, in German, to the stories of Saints or episodes from Scripture, and gradually showing, from the thirteenth century, an intrusion of the comic spirit, till it reaches, in the fifteenth, the *bourgeois* 'Fastnachtspiele,' the counterpart of the Moralities and Farces of the *Pathelin* type. There is nothing characteristically national in feature, which would constitute some such difference as we have remarked between the French and English: unless it be the rather greater delight, at the dawn of the sixteenth century, in the Terentian tradition of the monastic drama, of which the Gandersheim Hrotsuitha had supplied the earliest and most remarkable example; or unless a further hint of an idiosyncrasy be found in the triumphant coarseness of the later stages of the secular drama. The zest with which the good burghers indulged not only in sheer vulgar joking but in unredeemed obscenity is hardly paralleled in the early French drama. Here we have the genuine *bourgeois*, a burgher-made wit, sturdy, broad, and nasty, a wit which could enjoy the confidences of *Till Eulenspiegel* or the ways of Gambrinus or Grobianus, but was too heavy-headed for the subtleties of the Basoche or the philosophy of Pantagruel.[1]

The early German drama.

The first literary record of the German drama is in the twelfth-century commentary of Gerhoh von Reichensberg, where it appears that the ecclesiastical discipline at Augsburg was so lax that the brothers

[1] The Low German wit is much less extreme in its indecencies than that of the good folks of Bavaria.

rarely dined in the refectory except when they were entertained by plays of Herod, the Massacre of the Innocents, or other subjects (*ludis aliis aut spectaculis quasi theatralibus*).[1] The 'Spiele' or 'Mysterien' of the twelfth and thirteenth centuries are concerned, as elsewhere, with the Nativity, the Passion, the Resurrection, and especially Mary and Mary Magdalene—some being entirely in Latin, others gradually showing interpolations in German. A few, like the *Sacra comoedia de Josepho vendito* (1264), stray beyond the narrow liturgical limits; and the Latin *Antichrist* (*Ludus paschalis de adventu et interitu Antichristi*)[2] is of great interest, partly in the relation of its leading character to the Shrovetide reveller of the fifteenth-century 'Fastnachtspiele,' partly because of the analogy between its idea of a Universal Christian Empire and the political realisation of the same in Barbarossa's power. This form continues during the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries, showing the modifications which we have already noted in stronger evidence in the contemporary European drama, to wit, the further intrusion of the comic element from the thirteenth century onwards, and a growing fondness for extra-Biblical subjects like *Dorothea*, *Katharina*, *Theophilus*, or *Frau Jutta*. The nearest approach to a

[1] Migne, *Patrologia*, Ser. II. vol. 194, p. 890. Professor Vogt records the fact that plays on the adoration of the Shepherds and the Lament of Rachel for the Children are mentioned in two Latin inventories of the *eleventh* century (See Paul, *Grundriss der germ. Phil.*, II. i. 393).

[2] Ed. Gerh. von Zezschwitz, Leipzig, 1878: also *Deutsche National Litteratur*, vol. xiv. pt. i. p. 206.

serial, hardly cyclic, treatment comes in the fourteenth-century *Life of Christ*; the majority remain episodical. The most notable examples of the fourteenth and fifteenth centuries are the *Ten Virgins*, entitled *Ludus de decem virginibus* (*c.* 1320), but in German, and *Frau Jutta* (1480). The fifteenth-century Frankfort *Passionsspiel* (1493), which extended over two days and runs to 4408 lines, is a good example of the earlier type of the religious drama, belated in the days of the Rosenblüts and Folzes.[1]

The play of the *Ten Virgins*, which is extant in a Thuringian[2] and in a Hessian[3] text, is an example of the liturgical drama, and is one of the many offshots of that popular Christmas office of which the Southern French *Sponsus*, of the twelfth century, is the most striking example. The German play shows a certain secular advance over the Limoges piece, in that it was performed in a large hall in Eisenach, at the foot of the Wartburg, and on a three-tiered stage, as were the later Mysteries. Though to the modern mind it seems to lack the simple impressiveness which the French play derives from its *milieu*—the choir of the Church, from which the Wise Virgins pass behind the screen to the bridegroom's feast, and from which the Foolish Ones, after condemnation by a voice beyond the screen, are hustled out by a band of devils—yet the Wartburg play served its high purpose, and so

The Ten Virgins.

[1] Printed in Kürschner's *Deutsche National-Litteratur* (xiv. 2).

[2] Ed. Ludwig Bechstein (*Wartburgbibliothek* I.), 1855.

[3] Ed. Max Rieger (*Germania*, 10, 11).

filled the Landgrave Frederick with dismay at the indifference of Heaven to the passionate prayer of the exiled Virgins that he was stricken down and ere long died in sorrow. The most remarkable portions of the piece from a literary point of view are the Lament and the Invocation of the Virgins, which are in the lyrical measures of the Nibelungen-strophe. We may believe that the Eisenach clerics made the most of their devils and of the horrors of the lowest tier for the benefit of the tender consciences of the Landgrave and others, but the true tragedy, which overcame the Landgrave, was the inexorable silence of the Virgin. This was indeed rather an exception, especially in the later religious drama; for the fundamental idea of the Miracle was, as we have seen, the ultimate intervention of Heaven in behalf of the sinner through the mediation of Our Lady. The fact points to an important change in the early development of the drama.

Frau Jutta.

Frau Jutta,[1] which Theoderick Schernberg, a priest of Mülhausen, wrote in 1480, is a more elaborate example of the Miracle *motif*. The story was a great favourite in Germany, and tells of the adventures of an English girl Jutta in league with the devil. Under the name of John, in man's attire, and in the company of a clerk, she proceeds to Paris, where she studies in the schools, and attains such learning as fits her for the Court of Rome. There she becomes a Cardinal, and ultimately succeeds her patron Pope Basil in the Papal Chair. One day a Roman senator brings his son, who is possessed, to be

[1] Ed. Keller, *Fastnachtspiele*, No. 111.

cured by the Pope. John would remit the matter to the Cardinals, but the case is one which only a Pope can cure. The devil is exorcised, but takes his vengeance by exposing the fraud, and by declaring that Jutta is with child. Retribution follows, and the unfortunate woman, being offered by Heaven the choice of bearing her shame or of perishing eternally, declares for the former. Death is sent by Christ. Jutta dies in childbirth, and her soul is carried off to Hell. In her anguish she implores Our Lady and S. Nicholas. God sends Michael to free her, and to bring her to Heaven, where she expresses her gratitude to Christ and her intercessors. The play is in reality a Morality with the addition of the Miracle *motif*, and it is chiefly interesting as showing the strong bias of the popular drama in Germany towards the elaboration of the character of the Devil. Elsewhere during the formation of the early serious drama and in the process of crystallisation of the allegorical ideas, Diabolus had an important part, but no exclusive right to the title-rôle. In Germany we have, indeed, the evolution of a *Teufelspiel*. This characteristic is noticeable in the religious plays much earlier than *Frau Jutta*, though more remarkably in the almost contemporary *Theophilus*, in which the priest signs away his soul to the Evil One and is saved from destruction only by timely repentance. It remained the staple dramatic idea of the German people—long after the other things of national fancy, the Düreresque Death, the Melancholia, and the like, had lost their vivid reality—down to our own century, when Goethe

The 'Teufelspiel.'

achieved the triumphant *Teufelspiel* of the new Mephistopheles.

The Fastnachtspiele.

The 'Fastnachtspiele'[1] or Carnival-Plays of the fifteenth century are the nursery of German comedy. They are not necessarily of the comic type, —*Frau Jutta* is a 'Fastnachtspiel'—but in the main they incline to the humorous and frivolous. They seem to have arisen, in the great towns of South Germany, especially in Nürnberg and Bamberg, in natural reaction to the spirit of the Passion-, Christmas-, and Easter-Plays, just as the burlesques of the 'sotties,' 'monologues,' and 'sermons joyeux' had grown up in France. They show in many respects the technical characteristics of these French pieces, but they lack their thoroughness and constructive art. The wit is of the poorest and of the coarsest; and the absence of plot, even of the flimsiest kind, is generally remarkable. They have indeed no genuine dramatic quality, a fact which is explained by their origin as mumming-dialogues on personal and occasional topics, spoken by bands of young people as they passed from house to house during Carnival-time. Little more than tomfoolery was required to make these pieces interesting. The good folks laughed at the comic costumes, the men in old women's finery, and the over-blown 'ritters,' and enjoyed the personalities or riddles and *Priameln*—the style of fun which inspired the 'tenson,' the 'flyting,' or the later literary amenities of the German Humanists. Not a few

[1] Ed. A. v. Keller, Stuttgart Literary Society's Proceedings, 1853-58 (Nos. 28, 29, 30, and 46).

critics, especially in Germany, have persisted in calling this dialogue-manner essentially dramatic; and this view may be responsible for some of their conclusions on the early drama in Spain.[1] Pieces without plot or action cannot, except in a very arbitrary way, be called dramatic. The presence of the *Priamel* and similar forms is important as showing that the interest which the players aimed at stimulating in their auditors by means of conundrums, which were immaterial to the situation, and were as appropriate to one 'Fastnachtspiel' as another, would ultimately pass into the conception and construction of the form itself and arouse a dramatic idea. This of course was hardly possible so long as the pieces were merely part of the fun of the Carnival, and in this plight the German comic muse remained during the fifteenth century. Such a title as "Eine hübsche Priamel," which is given to a dialogue between Man and Death, is surely no argument for proving an essentially dramatic rather than didactic purpose. The best-known writers of 'Fastnachtspiele' are the Nürnbergers Hans Rosenblüt and Hans Folz,[2] and Hans Rosenstock of Bamberg. The *Vom Bapst, Cardinal, und von Bischoffen,* and the *Des Turken vasnachtspil* of the first are among the best, and the *Von einem pawrngericht* of the second is an excellent type of the singular dialogue character of the form.[3]

Rosenblüt, Folz, and Rosenstock.

[1] *Ante*, p. 307.

[2] *Ante*, p. 175.

[3] Keller, *u.s.* (Nos. 78, 39, and 112): also in *Deutsche Nat. Litt.*, xiv. pt. iii. For a bibliography of the "Fastnachtspiele" see Goedeke (*Grundriss*, i. 325, &c.)

It is unfortunate that the texts of the Low-German 'Fastnachtspiele' of the Lübeck 'Zirkelbrüder' are not extant, the more so as the list of titles, which is preserved, is of extreme interest. The date of each production is given, from 1430 to 1515, and there are over seventy pieces in all.[1]

Classical influence.

Towards the close of the century there are signs that German comedy might develop by the aid of classical and foreign material. The Terentian tradition of the monasteries had passed into the universities, and it remained academic. Plays were written, but in Latin. Of these the most noteworthy is Johann Capnio's, or Reuchlin's (1454-1522), *Henno*, a Latin transcript of the farce of *Pathelin*. In 1486 the Ulm press produced a German version of the *Eunuchus* by an unidentified writer, Hans Nythart, and in 1499 the six Terentian comedies were issued in German from the Strassburg press of Hans Grünynger. Albrecht von Eybe (1420-1475), chamberlain of Pius II., translated, or rather adapted, the *Menaechmi* and *Bacchides* of Plautus and the *Philogenia* of Ugolino, but these did not appear till 1511, in the Augsburg edition of his *Spiegel der Sitten*. The Humanistic efforts had no real influence on the main body of the early German drama, and even in the region of the academic drama they are but the promise of what sixteenth and seventeenth century Germany utterly failed to realise.

[1] See the list in Goedeke, i. 476-478.

CHAPTER X.

THE PROSE EXPERIMENT IN ENGLAND.

THE PROSE TRADITION—CHANGE OF FUNCTION—ITS CRITICAL INTEREST PROSPECTIVE AND EXPERIMENTAL—ENGLISH PROSE—REGINALD PECOCK—HIS LITERARY PROBLEM—SIR JOHN FORTESCUE—THE MATERIAL NEEDS OF PROSE STYLE—SIR THOMAS MALORY—THE 'MORTE D'ARTHUR'—ITS EXCEPTIONAL QUALITIES—ITS MODULATION—WILLIAM CAXTON—HIS "REDUCTION" OF ENGLISH—"OBSTETRIX MUSARUM"—LORD BERNERS—THE PARADOX OF HIS STYLE—HIS HISTORICAL POSITION AS AN EXPONENT OF THE "HIGH STYLE"—JOHN FISHER—THE PROSING OF THE ROMANCES—SCOTTISH PROSE—THE POETS AND PROSE.

WE do not look in the prose of the fifteenth century for any of those niceties of style, or for that confidence of craftsmanship, which gives more modern prose its high consideration as a literary art and engine. In a period when verse is so dully imitative, but little freshness can be expected in a form in which writers engaged almost apologetically, or which they reserved for the humdrum work of annals, homilies, or domestic medicine.[1] There are

The prose tradition.

[1] Like the *Fysshinge with an Angle* and other treatises of Dame Juliana Berners (*b.* ? 1388), the translation of La Tour Landry (1440),

exceptions, like the occasional patches in Old English prose which transcend the workaday methods of the scriptorium, or like the later treatment of the *novella* in the hands of Boccaccio, or even of the chronicle by the poetic enthusiasm of Froissart. On the threshold of the century English prose had essayed, in the ever-delightful Mandeville, the more secular charm and romantic freedom of the Isle of Lango and the land of Ermonye. But it is true that in the main the æsthetic stigma abided. On the other hand, it is also true that in the fifteenth century there are evidences of a change of attitude, or, rather, of a change of capacity, which would inevitably affect the general purpose of authorship. And though the prose-work of the century is but an unconnected series of efforts, representing no such school of art as is recognised even in the degenerate verse, there is a sort of cumulative proof that we are no longer dealing with exceptions, but with the unorganised beginnings of a definite transformation. The common element in the best writers, as in their feeblest brethren, is still a reliance on classical models, a moulding of the vernaculars to the patterns supplied by monkish Latinity, or, later, to the fancies of Renaissance scholarship. As yet, prose is not the accepted medium of the popular or *bourgeois* spirit, which prefers to indulge its energies in the traditional

Change of function.

the various books of Courtesy and Cookery, Palladius's *Husbondrie* (*c.* 1420), Lanfranc's *Cirurgie* (1400), and the *Prymer* or Lay-Folks' Prayer-Book (*c.* 1420)—which have less claim than the *Paston Letters* to be called literature.

verse-forms; just as, by contrast, the strongly aristocratic literature of the eighteenth century finds its fullest expression in prose. There is, nevertheless, a certain original and new flavour in the best prose of the fifteenth century, which we may define as a recognition of its utility and possibilities as a literary medium; and in the subject-matter there is evidence of a wider range of interest. The matters are still largely history, doctrine, and morals; but the history, as we have it in Commines and the Italian *Vite*, has a different *timbre* from that of the older Chronicle and Lives, and must have appealed to contemporaries in a new way, just as it appeals to us as something which we, as moderns, can better understand and appreciate. Moreover, the increase in the number of translations, besides having an immediate and far-reaching effect on the art of expression, necessarily tended to swell the resources of each national literature and to stimulate the imagination.

Though we shall avoid the heresy that there was a break in the continuity of English prose, any more than in the verse, we shall find that our critical attitude towards the one is antithetic to that towards the other. In the case of the verse it is most natural, as well as historically useful, to relate it, in its generality, to earlier work, and to explain it in the terms of a passing tradition. Fifteenth century prose, on the other hand, has an increasingly prospective interest. Pecock is not our first prose-writer, but there is a hint in him that there is something a-work which

Its critical interest prospective

must transform the entire art and craft of the matter. With the poets it is otherwise; even Villon and Dunbar, however much they interest us by their promise of the new and by their individuality, are accepted as modifications of a traditional poetic, or even as 'sports' from an old and deep-rooted stem. Shakespeare's art and greatness is the better understood through the perspective of his predecessors; and the secret of Burns, the apostle of a New Spirit, is historical. It may appear paradoxical to say that prose, the inferior in artistic attainment, is more individual than poetry in its evolution, less reliant on pre-existing conditions, more concerned with the realisation of certain æsthetic results than with singing the burdens of old songs or re-transmuting the abiding ideals of the human soul. The history of poetry is a re-expression, a record of fashion and mood, sometimes allegorical, Elizabethan, Augustan, Pre-Raphaelite, continually changing. Prose, on the other hand, is less concerned with schools of art. For convenience sake, it may at times be called 'ornate,' at times 'severe,' 'Euphuistic' or 'Meredithian,' and the influence of one phase may be seen in another, or in a single exponent of another; but its sole and essential continuity is the continuity of the craftsman's endeavour to have the best tools, and to use them in the best way, for one or more of the many special purposes for which they may be required. As long as prose remained unacknowledged in the vernacular literatures, and was considered as the dust-bin for the second-rate fancies and the mere

and experimental.

business of life, it is of but the basest consideration as literature — uniformly dull in following certain established canons, which it barely understood, and could not use to good purpose.

English prose.

English prose in the fifteenth century offers an excellent illustration of the experimental character of its beginnings. Capgrave and Fabyan[1] are the only authors of some repute who are indifferent to the struggle and pen their chronicles in a lifeless way, though in the later writer, and in the later portion of his *Concordance of Histories*, there is a dawning recognition of the difference between the monks' and Froissart's art of history. But Pecock and Fortescue, Caxton, Berners, and Fisher have, each and all, and in their several ways, a professional interest in the making of English prose; and Malory, who stands apart as the author of the immortal and only Arthuriad, is a master as much by the distinction of his workmanship as by the imaginative intensity of his genius or by the greatness of his subject. There are passages of good omen for English prose in minor works of the quality of Lydgate's *Serpent of Division*, or the translations of the *De Imitatione*,[2] Deguileville's *Second*

[1] John Capgrave (1393-1464); Robert Fabyan (*d.* 1513). Their ventures in verse also are of poor account. Capgrave's tedious Life of *St Katharine* was honoured by the bore Osbern of Bokenham (in his *Lyvys of Seyntys*), and has been edited for the E.E.T.S. by Dr Horstmann, 1893. Fabyan occasionally fell into metre in his chronicles.

[2] See p. 405. The earliest English translation is printed with Atkynson's (Bks. i.-iii.) and Lady Margaret's (Bk. iv.) by the E.E.T.S. (ed. Ingram), 1893. It has been ascribed, but without proof, to Walter Hilton, author of the *Scale of Perfection*.

Pilgrimage,[1] De Voragine's *Legenda Aurea*,[2] and the *Gesta Romanorum*;[3] but they occur by good luck rather than by intention. When Caxton came to prepare his *Golden Legend*, the earlier fifteenth-century version was already inadequate. The first English translator of the *Imitation* (*c.* 1460) has a direct style, but slightly 'aureated' in the vocabulary; Atkynson, forty years later, has so 'farded and interlarded' his version that we are distracted by his rhetorical ingenuity.

Reginald Pecock.

Reginald Pecock (? 1395-? 1460), raised to the bishopric of St Asaph by the friendly offices of the good Duke Humphrey, and ultimately Bishop of Chichester, is an important figure in the Wycliffite controversies of the century, and was wholly interesting to his contemporaries for the subject-matter of his writings. The tragedy of his career was the enmity of his friends, whose orthodoxy and polity he had sought to support by the aid of arguments founded on reason. He misjudged his time and his men, for the Archbishop in passing sentence upon him refused to dispute with him in many words, "for we see that you abound more in talk *than in reasoning*." Master Reginald might well have gone to the stake after that, and shared the fate of his three folios and eleven quartos; but he chose, not so ignominiously or inconsistently as some would have it, to yield to the Church, and to become the prisoner of the

[1] Ascribed by some to Lydgate; but see Dr Schick's *Temple of Glas*, ci.

[2] See Mr Pierce Butler's Dissertation on the *Legenda Aurea* (Baltimore, 1899).

[3] Ed. Herrtage (E.E.T.S., 1879).

Abbot of Thorney. To us the purpose of his misadventure is forgotten, for it could not well have survived Hooker's larger effort, but his method has an abiding historical interest to the student of English literature. To the more superficial reader who might be induced to peruse the leading specimens of English prose from its earliest beginnings, *The Repressor of overmuch Blaming of the Clergy*[1] and the *Treatise of Faith* will appear to be the first prose-books which condescend to his intelligence and invite him to consider matters which are neither of authority nor of tradition. Pecock's difficult problem was to treat topics, which were the special business of scholastic theology both in their subjects and in their exposition,[2] in such a way as would commend them to the cultured laity of his day, and at the same time to avoid the wildness and carelessness of mere Lollardy. This vernacularising of patristic abstraction was in a sense a contradiction, but it had important results in the technique of English prose. It implied, in the first place, a certain quality of self-possession in the author, perhaps even vanity. There is more than a suspicion that Pecock's appeal to a larger public was not out of an entirely simple regard for the souls of the better Wycliffites or for the comforts of his order. In some respects he anticipates the egoism of the 'reasoned'

His literary problem.

[1] Ed. Babington (Rolls Series), 2 vols., 1860.

[2] The best examples of orthodox Latinity of the time are by Thomas Netter of Saffron Walden (?1380-1430), such as the *Doctrinale Antiquitatum Ecclesiae*, the *De Sacramentis*, and the famous *Fasciculi Zizaniorum*.

prose of the Renaissance, and it may well be imagined that the antipathy from which he suffered was to a great extent inspired by the mediæval hatred of even well-meaning self-assertion. Further, in his struggle to reconcile S. Ambrose and Sir John Oldcastle, patristic Latinity and plain English, he often succumbed to a morbid ingenuity in the tricks of words and phrase, as well as in his metaphors and arguments. Thus he says, "Even as grammar and divinity be two diverse faculties and cunnings, and therefore be unmeddled, and each of them hath his proper to him bounds and marks, how far and no farther he shall stretch himself upon matters, truths, and conclusions, and not to *entermete*, neither *entermeene*, with any other faculty's bounds; and even as saddlery and tailory be two diverse faculties and cunnings, and therefore be unmeddled," &c.;[1] as elsewhere, in his elaborate justification of Images, he revels, though simpler in language, in schoolmen's analogies. Even in his vocabulary he is forced into choosing archaic forms as a compromise between the extreme of Latin and of everyday speech. It is remarkable, however, that he is more modern than Chaucer in his prose, and that he has fewer Teutonic words and more Romance words that are now obsolete.[2] How much he is an experimenter in style is shown by such makings as 'mind-places' (memorials), 'beholdable' (theoretic), and the like. He has something of the intention of the coming reformers of

[1] *Repressor*, Part I.

[2] See Oliphant, *Old and Middle English* (1891), p. 504.

the vernacular, but he is remarkably free from their general tendency to the 'aureate' view of the matter. Despite the temptations and necessities of his subject, he inclines the other way.

Sir John Fortescue.

Sir John Fortescue (?1394-?1476) is, critically as well as chronologically, the fellow of Pecock, in that he disclosed the Latin-bound secrets of constitutional law, as Pecock had done for theology, and by so doing strove to maintain the justness and orderliness of existing conditions; and, secondly, in that his methods of style are almost identical. Even the most picturesque facts of their lives—Pecock's imprisonment and Fortescue's exile, and their respective acts of recantation or retraction—supplement the parallelism. Fortescue wrote in both Latin and English, choosing the latter to amplify and explain the arguments of his more exhaustive treatises. Thus his dialogue, *A Declaration upon certain writings sent out of Scotland*, follows, in the character of a retractation, on the *De titulo Edwardi comitis Marchiae* and the ponderous *De Natura Legis Naturae*, and the *Governance of England*[1] is in a sense a *précis* of his *De Laudibus Legum Angliae*. The two last are his chief works—the *De Laudibus*, the great historical defence of English legal procedure as contrasted with that of the canonists and Continental lawyers,[2] and the *Governance*, which has the additional interest of its English style. That style, like Pecock's,

[1] Ed. Plummer, Oxford, 1885. For the other works see Lord Clermont's edition.

[2] Translated by R. Mulcaster (1573).

is of the plain order, incisive and actual, but with a fainter suspicion of metaphor. Its outstanding quality of directness, which is perhaps more remarkable than in Pecock's English, comes, as in Pecock's case, from a professional seriousness, not from any artistic insight. After full allowance has been made for pedantry or formality in a fifteenth-century lawyer, there is still a certain straightforwardness in Fortescue's writing. Nor is this surprising in a man who had sufficient enthusiasm to see something of the glory of the Golden Age in the political and legal life of his country amid the turmoils of the Lancastrian succession. His style is tentative; and here, again, it exactly reflects the intellectual condition of the writer and of his age. He had to explain to his prince the superiority of the English polity over the French—even the superexcellence of the English lower classes, to argue for a strict rule of male succession, and to reargue the question when the political atmosphere had changed.[1] Thus feeling his way in ideas, he feels his way in the art of expression: in both he is for the most part sincere, despite his 'retractations' on the one hand and his pedantic phrases on the other. In both he is the experimentalist, and, on the literary side, a seeker after those things which were necessary to make English prose a trusty instrument, before it could essay the expression of more imaginative subtleties. In other words, he helped it to realise its material

The material needs of prose style.

[1] He indulges in the pretty quibble that every woman is really in subjection to one man—the Pope!

needs, while the poets were wholly absorbed in their own blind way in preparing a new metrical medium for the sixteenth century. Like them he scarcely, if ever, reaches that mastery of harmony which defines the artist in verse or in prose; but he clears the way for his successors, and is himself not devoid of that attractiveness which comes from such other positive qualities of good prose as clearness and orderliness, and, from its very earnestness, the power of convincing. If his egoism is less assertive than Pecock's, his literary consciousness, which was a necessity to him as to Pecock, is unmistakable.

Sir Thomas Malory.

The contrast between the *Repressor* or the *Governance of England* and the *Morte d'Arthur*[1] of Sir Thomas Malory (*fl.* 1470) is not merely a contrast of subject, between doctrine or argument and legendary narrative. Had Malory's talent led him no further than to make his book a story of Arthur, as earlier writers had treated Brutus or Havelok in verse, it is fair to suppose that such an Arthuriad might have lacked the distinction which belongs to even the didactic prose of its century. Like so much of the work of its age, the *King Arthur*, or in its better known title the *Morte d'Arthur*, is a compilation, a mosaic of the French romances of Merlin, Lancelot, and Tristan and the English metrical versions of the *Morte Arthure*.[2] And yet

The Morte d'Arthur.

[1] Ed. Oskar Sommer, London, 1889-91; another edition with introduction by Professor Rhys, 2 vols., London, 1893.

[2] Book V. perhaps follows the Thornton version (ed. Halliwell, 1847; Perry, 1865; Brock, 1865), and Books XX. and XXI. certainly the Harleian version (ed. Furnivall, 1864).

there is no monument of our early literature—and not in prose alone—which so triumphantly escapes such shortcomings of style as would have been quite excusable in the circumstances, and almost to be expected. It stands apart, unoppressed by the dulness of the chronicler, or by that restlessness of endeavour which gives little more than an academic interest to the generality of fifteenth-century prose. The absence of these contemporary characteristics is due to its artistic quality, which is shown both in the imaginative sense which pervades the work and in that mastery of expression and proportion in treatment which are impossible under the conditions of mere experiment. It is not that Malory is ingenuously simple, or takes no pains in the selection of vocabulary, or arranges the matters of Arthur at haphazard, but rather that he conceals the means by which he obtains his complete result. For this reason he is outside the æsthetic category in which we must place his contemporaries, and even more finished in style, if perhaps less individual, than Villon or Dunbar in verse. His unique position is made the clearer by the examination of the work of his immediate successors, who, as it were, return to the *atelier* to learn and practise, and never lose, in any of the stages of their rhetorical apprenticeship, whether in their plain or 'aureate' efforts, the consciousness of the mere student. The *Morte d'Arthur* supplied the rhythm and harmony which Pecock and Fortescue did not attain. If one word will point the complete contrast between it and the other prose of its age, it is

Its exceptional qualities.

modulation. Malory's prose is conscious, without the jarring egoism of the younger prose; it adopts new words, without the risk of pedantry and harshness; and it expresses the varying importance of the passages of the story in a corresponding fluctuation in the intensity of its language. This last quality appears to me to be at once the revealing difference between it and all our early prose works and the secret of its abiding power as a classic. Malory is neither uniformly matter-of-fact nor under a perpetual high strain. He has the secret of variety and cadence, the mastery of the 'curve,' which is the eternal symbol of the highest artistic effort. In Book V., for example, he describes the dragon of Arthur's dream: "He came flying out of the West, and his head was enamelled with azure, and his shoulders shone as gold, his belly like mails of marvellous hue, his tail full of tatters, his feet full of fine sable, and his claws like fine gold; and an hideous flame of fire flew out of his mouth, like as the land and water had flamed all of fire" (chap. iv.) If we compare this passage with the companion twelve lines (762-773) of the excellent alliterative romance, which he may have had by him, we shall readily appreciate his superior craftsmanship in the turning and grouping of phrase and in the subtler adjustment of identical word and epithet. And nowhere does he show more fully the sublimating power of the master-translator than in the account of the death of Sir Lancelot and his burial in Joyous Gard,[1] or in that favourite passage on the

Its modulation.

[1] Book XXI. chap. xii.

'passing' of Arthur,[1] in which these sentences are: "And so then they rowed from the land, and Sir Bedivere beheld all those ladies go from him. Then Sir Bedivere cried, 'Ah, my lord Arthur, what shall become of me, now ye go from me and leave me here alone among mine enemies.' 'Comfort thyself,' said the king, 'and do as well as thou mayest, for in me is no trust for to trust in; for I will into the vale of Avilion to heal me of my grievous wound: and if thou hear never more of me, pray for my soul.' But ever the queens and ladies wept and shrieked, that it was pity to hear. And as soon as Sir Bedivere had lost the sight of the barge, he wept and wailed, and so took the forest; and so he went all that night, and in the morning he was ware betwixt two holts hoar, of a chapel and an hermitage." Of such is the matter which Sir Thomas Malory, in Caxton's phrase, "dyd take out of certeyn bookes of frensshe and reduced it to Englysshe," and in which the worthy Roger Ascham in a purblind moment saw only "open mans slaughter and bold bawdrye." Caxton, who gave us the *editio princeps* of the prose Arthur, had a keener critical insight. His words modestly convey to us an important historical fact, and as modestly conceal the original excellence of the twice-told tale. And there is in the *Morte d'Arthur*, apart from all question of style or construction, that persistent appreciation of the simple beauty of natural things, in life as in landscape, which distinguishes the masterpiece.

[1] Book XXI. chap. v.

The bibliographers have so monopolised everything Caxtonian, that we are apt to forget how much the master-printer himself 'reduced' from the French into no mean English. Caxton (?1422-1491),[1] unlike Fortescue, was not interested in politics, and had therefore no brief against the French. His literary sympathies had compelled his admiration —as he tells us in the Prologue of his first book, *The Recuyell of the Histories of Troye*—not only of the 'novelty' of the French matter but of "the fair language of French which was in prose so well and compendiously set and written, which methought I understood the sentence and substance of every matter." This early recognition of the abiding quality of French prose would be interesting in itself, but it is doubly so in its critical bearing on English style, such as it was in the fifteenth century. Caxton's heroic endeavour to adjust a standard for the undisciplined English, and to attain thereby something of the *clarté* of the French writers, came at the right moment. The pressing problem which English prose had to solve was not so much how to improve the matter, after Malory's fashion, as to 'reduce' the form to meet growing practical needs, after the manner of Pecock and Fortescue. Caxton's attitude is, however, more literary than theirs; it is a protest against that "Englyshe confused" which disturbs Skelton in his *Speke*,

William Caxton.

His "reduction" of English.

[1] A useful bibliography of the works of Caxton, second to Mr Blades's, will be found in Morley's *English Writers*, vi. 293-337.

Parrot.[1] He has less to argue than Pecock or Fortescue, but he certainly shows the artist's aim in trying that the pleasure and profit of the French books which he admires shall be transferred as purely and freely as he may to his English readers. He is more impersonal than Pecock, and therefore perhaps less interesting to us. When he asserted himself, he did so chiefly to break the even tenor of his literal version by an occasional paraphrase or omission or re-arrangement, or the use of a foreign word, for which he knew no English equivalent. This was Gavin Douglas's gravamen against Caxton's *Eneydos*, which caused the good bishop to "spit for despite" at the mistranslations and "overhoppings."[2] Caxton's work had not the scholarly pretension of Douglas's, for he made it from a French prose version, *Le Livre des Eneydes*, and he was more concerned with the chivalric interest of the great classic than with grammarians' foibles. And it must be said, with all deference to Douglas's learning, that Caxton better served the romantic purpose of his age and the practical endeavour of English prose style. He did something at least to clear the mists which lay between the vernacular and classical or foreign literatures. Though his chief fame must be as *obstetrix Musarum*—in the double sense of being the

[1] "So many morall maters, and so lytell usyd;
So myche newe making, and so mad tyme spente;
So myche translacioun in to Englyshe confused;
So myche nobyll prechyng, and so lytell amendment."
—*Speke, Parrot*, ll. 442-445.

[2] Gavin Douglas, *Eneados*, Book I., Prol.

founder of the English printing-press, and of being the means, through a well-considered intention, of adding new material to our literature—he holds an important place among the early fashioners of our prose style, both on account of the manner of his renderings and by reason of the valuable prologues and epilogues which he has affixed to most of his translated printed works.[1] He frequently refers to his modest purpose, as in the 'Proheme' to his edition of the *Polychronicon*—"symply emprynted . . . by me William Caxton, and a lytel embelysshed fro tholde makyng."

Obstetrix Musarum.

John Bourchier, Lord Berners (*c.* 1467-1533), and John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester, belong rather to the sixteenth century, if a hard-and-fast rule of division were to be adopted, but they deserve some brief consideration here as illustrating a transition in the experimental conditions of fifteenth-century prose. Lord Berners confined himself, like Caxton, almost entirely to translation, generally from the French. His chief work is his rendering of Froissart's *Chronicles*,[2] but he has also left *The Hystorye of the moost noble and valiaunt Knyght Arthur of lytell Brytaine*,[2] from which Spenser would seem to have drawn some of his material, *The Historie of Huon of Burdeux*,[3] *The Golden Book of Marcus Aurelius* (from a French version of Guevara's

Lord Berners.

[1] See especially the *Recuyell*, the *Dictes and Sayings* (his first book printed in England), Malory's *Kyng Arthur*, and the *Eneydos*.

[2] Ed. Utterson, 1812.

[3] Ed. Lee (E.E.T.S., 1882-87).

Relox de Príncipes), and the *Castell of Love*, from the Spanish of Diego de San Pedro.[1] There is something paradoxical in Berners's style. The complete success of the general effect, in his *Chronicles* for example, is hardly justified by the details of his method. No one will for a moment be blind to the fact that in his version we have the spirit of the original, and that there is as great a difference between it and fourteenth-century translations as between Froissart's style and that of most of his predecessors in the writing of history. Yet in the separate parts, in the paragraph, in the sentence, or even in the word, it would be difficult to find promise of a successful *ensemble*. Berners's taste, as befits a man of affairs, turns to the actualities of history, which he calls "the most profitable thing in this world for the institution of the human life"; but the exactitude and directness implied in that mental attitude are not reflected in his style. His mistranslations count for nothing; he states in his *Preface* that he has "not followed mine author word for word." He is quite as conscious a writer as, and perhaps more so than, Caxton or even Pecock, but his consciousness does not lead him in the direction of clearness. Where he is most simple in style, as in the text of the *Chronicles*, he often sacrifices the harmony of his sentences by anacolutha and disjointed phrases; and in his more individual efforts, as in the Preface to the same, his wit inclines to the ornate and conceited. Thus his most profitable and practical history is "the light of truth, the mistress of the life

The paradox of his style.

[1] See p. 399.

human, the president of remembrance, and the messenger of antiquity;" "it moveth, stirreth, and compelleth to honesty; detesteth, irketh, and abhorreth vices; it extolleth, enhanceth, and lifteth up such as ben noble and virtuous; depresseth, poistereth, and thrusteth down such as ben wicked, evil, and reprovable." These characteristics do not militate against Berners's claim as one of the most sympathetic and entertaining of our early translators, and they indicate, on the question of his technique, that the problem of experiment as understood by his predecessors had undergone modification.

His historical position as an exponent of the "high style."

The critical intention in passages such as those just quoted is the improvement of the vernacular by decoration and elaboration, and, though as yet the allusive and metaphorical qualities are barely recognisable, there is an obvious suggestion of that sixteenth-century tendency which culminated in Euphuism. Berners is often named as the first of that line of prose exquisites from Bryan and North to Lyly who naturalised the *alto estilo* of the popular 'Aurelian' novel of Antonio de Guevara. He translated, as stated above, that popular work. At the conclusion he wrote these remarkable words: "a ryght precious meate is the sentences of this booke. But finally the sauce of the sayd sweete style moveth the appetite. Many bookes there be of substantiall meates, but they be so rude and so unsavoury, and the style of so smalle grace, that the first morcell is lothsome and noyfull." This is a direct admission by Berners that he had

found in Guevara the tricks of art which were to reform English prose, and we are safe to believe that in his *Golden Book* he openly approved and followed the 'craft' as well as the 'sentence' of his original. The first editions of the Spanish work are dated 1529,[1] and the English version was completed and published in 1532. The Froissart, with its 'high-styled' preface, was issued from Pynson's press in Fleet Street in 1525. Unless therefore the two British Museum editions of the 1529 Guevara are not really the first by at least half-a-dozen years, Berners may be credited with having anticipated to a certain degree the principles which the Spaniard and his European translators more clearly defined. The passage quoted above from his later translation of Guevara shows that he had a critical appreciation of the change in prose style, and it is reasonable to think that not only did his interest in Guevara stimulate his style in this direction, but that his earlier, though less emphatic, endeavours towards the same end were a predisposing cause to his later interest in the "high style."

John Fisher.

The English work of John Fisher, Bishop of Rochester (? 1459-1535), supplies further evidence of the gradual passage of fifteenth-century prose-style to the more professional manner of Lyly and his contemporaries. The character of his writings—sermons, short religious treatises, and

[1] See Landmann's *Euphues*, 1887, p. xvii, n. North's *Diall of Princes* is a translation of an expanded text of the *Relox*; and it was to his *Diall* that Lyly was primarily indebted.

The Ways to Perfect Religion—tended to an accentuation of the ornate style.[1] The subjects readily lent themselves to the use of similitude and symbolism, and their occasion naturally gave ample opportunity for tricks of rhetoric. Both in illustration and in balance his style is clearly in the direct line to Euphuism. Not only is the general effect richer and fuller than it is in previous experiments in the suppling of English prose, but the artistic purpose is on a higher level. The choice of doublets, of English and foreign origin, in phrase-making, and the fondness for triads in his syntax, prove a mastery in the mere craft of prose which no predecessor except the inspired Malory had attained, and show, in general, a style remarkably free alike from the spirit and effort of the early amateur prose and from the affected ease of the 'trick'-writers of Elizabeth's age. The circumstances under which he wrote saved him from the excessive archaism which the first prose-writers naturally accepted as a means of dignifying the vernacular; and the same cause restrained the use of Latin quotations, which might have been excused in a theologian and is certainly more in evidence in the lay-writings of his contemporaries.

The prosing of the romances.

The work of Malory, Caxton, and Berners shows that the transmutation of the old romantic material into prose form had already begun, and that an exceptionally high standard of literary excellence had been reached. The process did not,

[1] English Works, vol. i., ed. Mayor (E.E.T.S., 1876). His Latin works appeared at Wurzburg in 1597.

however, become so general, or rather so immediately popular, in England as on the Continent. We have few, if any, long original prose romances which might correspond with the prose versions of the *Chansons de geste* in France, or even of the German *Heldensagen.* Some may, by courtesy, be referred to the close of the fifteenth century, such as the story of *Robert the Devyll,* which was printed in English prose by Wynkyn de Worde direct from a French version, but whether from the French metrical version of the thirteenth century or from the prose copy which was printed at Lyons in 1496 and at Paris in 1497, it might be difficult to decide. *Frier Rush,* for example, which we have in a 1620 edition, can be traced no further back than to a Strassburg version of 1515. The prose *Knight of the Swan* may precede the French prose romance of 1504, though the metrical form of the story in *Chevalere Assigne,* as late as the reign of Henry VI., is against the supposition. It appears, therefore, to be safer to place the anonymous prose romances [1] in a later century. In all probability they are not much earlier than the age of Deloney and his professional brethren, when, as we have seen, important changes also took place in the technique and vogue of the ballad-form. It would seem that in the fifteenth century English popular taste had not yet realised any serious necessity of a substitute for the dying romances and romance-poems, partly for the reason that the metrical form had obtained a further lease of life in the ballads. The absence, or the belated appear-

[1] See Thoms's *Prose Romances,* 2nd edit., 3 vols., London, 1858.

[illegible]

[illegible] part in the development of [illegible] prose. [illegible] in the [illegible] work of Bellenden [illegible] and the [illegible] of the *Com-playnt of Scotland*. The earliest and most important [illegible] are [illegible] translations by Gilbert Hay, who is probably referred to by Dunbar and Lyndsay in their well-known lists, namely *The Buke of Armys* or *Buke of Bataillis*, made in 1456 from the *Arbre des Batailles* of Honoré Bonet, Prior of Salon in Provence, the *Buke of the Order of Knycht-hede*, from the anonymous *Livre de l'Ordre de Chevalerie*, which, later, tempted Caxton to an independent translation, and the *Buke of the Governaunce of Princis*, a *rechauffé* of the popular pseudo-Aristotelian *Secreta Secretorum*. It would be difficult to point to any pieces in prose besides these, except fragments like *The Craft of Deyng*, *The Wisdom of Solomon*, or *The Vertewis of the Mess*,[2] or even more scrappy remains like the doubtful passage between the sixth and seventh books of Douglas's translation of the *Æneid*. Such pieces are of great philological value, on account of the scarcity of specimens of Middle Scots prose, but they are hardly literary in quality. Occasionally

[1] Ed. J. H. Stevenson (Scottish Text Society; in the press, 1900). The *Order of Knighthede* was printed in 1847 (Abbotsford Club, ed. Botfield).

[2] Printed in *Ratis Raving and other moral and religious pieces*. Ed. Lumby. (E.E.T.S., 1870.)

the dull didacticism of their overloaded sentences is relieved by a happy turn, as when the author of the *Craft of Deyng* speaks of the death of the Good Man as "nocht ell bot the pasing of personis retwrnynge fra banasynge" or "the agane-cumynge to the kynde lande." The prevailing tone, however, is severely commonplace; and prose has few opportunities outside state papers, legal acts, or private correspondence of a matter-of-fact kind. The recently discovered text of the earliest Scottish *New Testament*, which is probably of the fifteenth century, is a mere recension of Wiclif, or more probably of John Purvey, and its occasional merits of word and phrase come rather from the robust Northern vocabulary than from any virtue of style in the transcriber. Though the version is of the first historical importance, it scarcely has the experimental value of a translation; and it is doubtful whether the copyist, who may have been one of the Kyle Lollards, knew his *Vulgate*, or even consulted it.[1] The *corpus* of prose, original or translated, must be very small, for the literary Scot of these days was more at home in Latin than in his "maternall toung." When merchants and even inn-keepers at a later period were described by intelligent travellers as cunning in Latinity (of a sort),[2] it is small wonder that in literary matters a vernacular prose had no consideration. The only prose of any merit is to be found in the Latin letters

[1] Ed. T. G. Law (Scottish Text Society; in the press, 1900).

[2] Jodocus in his *Itinerarium* speaks of a Scots Boniface in Kent as "callens Latine."

of Patrick Pantar (? 1470-1519), James IV.'s secretary,[1] and in the brief remains of Bishop Elphinstone, the founder of the University of Aberdeen; and in these the vocabulary is not only foreign, but the style shows little or nothing of the national characteristics which appear in the vernacular at a later period. Prose works out its natural development in the historical Latin of John Mair and George Buchanan; and it is not till the strain of political and religious trouble in the mid-sixteenth century that its *raison d'être* as a medium for a less academic public is really possible. The absence of a Scots vernacular prose, especially during that fuller time of the so-called Golden Age, is a remarkable, perhaps unique, phenomenon. The secularising and popularising forces which mark the progress of the prose idea elsewhere were excluded, or had to find expression in a rather spasmodic way through other channels, of which even the dramatic was closed; and the lack of apprenticeship and experiment imposed upon the later efforts in vernacular prose an unwholesome subjection to humanistic Latin.

The Poets and Prose.

It is important to note that prose did not attract the English and Scottish poets as it did the poets elsewhere. It would be hard to point to any but the merest fragments, such as the passage in Gavin Douglas referred to above, or the short essay in Skelton's *Boke of Thre Fooles* on Avarice

[1] Ed. Thomas Ruddimann, Edin., 1722. See also the writer's *Days of James IV.*, p. 189.

in Marriage, Envy, and Voluptuousness.[1] And, conversely, none of the English writers whom we have just discussed made any claim to be considered as poets. In France, on the other hand, we shall see that the poets, and many of the best of them, not only wrote in prose, but inclined more and more to that medium, and at times, as with Chartier, produced their best work in that form. The separation between poetic and prose style in England has always been, at least in its later stages, well-defined and more absolute than in France. This is obvious alike by general contrast and by comparison of each kind in any individual author—between the verse of the Elizabethan drama and the prose of the Marprelate pamphlets, or between the prose and verse of Milton, or of Dryden, or of Coleridge. There is no such distinction of spirit and manner between the *conteurs* and poets of the fifteenth century, or between the prose and the verse of Chastellain, or indeed between the prose and the verse of any French writer from that time down to the generation of the author of the *Travailleurs de la Mer* and the *Chants du Crépuscule*. The interest of the matter to us is that this national contrast is already discernible amid the very beginnings of modern prose style in the fifteenth century.

[1] Ed. Dyce, i. 200-205.

CHAPTER XI.

THE EXPANSION OF PROSE IN FRANCE.

THE TRADITIONAL AND CONTEMPORARY CLAIMS OF FRENCH PROSE—HISTORICAL SUBJECTS—EPISODICAL TREATMENT—THE BIOGRAPHIES—FRANCE AND BURGUNDY—THE FRENCH CHRONICLERS—THE BURGUNDIAN GROUP—GEORGES CHASTELLAIN—THE MINOR BURGUNDIANS—COMMINES—HIS MEDIÆVAL AND NON-MEDIÆVAL ELEMENTS—HIS RELATION TO THE RENAISSANCE—HIS ÆSTHETIC WEAKNESS—THE TRANSLATORS—THE SERMONS—PARALLELISM WITH THE DRAMA—MENOT AND MAILLARD—THE MACARONIC LANGUAGE—DIDACTIC PROSE—THE PROSE "CHANSONS DE GESTE"—ANTOINE DE LA SALLE—'PETIT JEHAN DE SAINTRÉ'—THE 'QUINZE JOIES DE MARIAGE'—THE 'CENT NOUVELLES NOUVELLES.'

FROISSART'S poetry, it has well been said, must be sought for in his prose Chronicle, not, as the worthy canon fondly thought, in the *beaux dictés* of his early love-verse. What is true of Froissart is true in a general way of the century which succeeded him.

The traditional and contemporary claims of French prose.

Not only does prose absorb more and more the intellectual energies of the French nation, but even among the professed poets there is a growing fondness for the freer medium. Alain Chartier, a poet after the heart of

his generation, did better work in prose than in verse, and there was hardly a contemporary but varied, with more or less success, the strain of verse-making by a sort of holiday prose. This trend in the mood of the century produced not only a vast increase in the writing of prose books and treatises, but important ultimate results in the entire national literature. Much the greater part of the prose remains of the fifteenth century is devoted to the Chronicles and Tales, which represent the final stage in the transformation of the style of the *chanson de geste* and the fabliau. The process had extended over a longer period in France than elsewhere, with the result that in the fifteenth century the craft of prose was more familiar and widespread, and showed less of effort and experiment. In the best English prose, with the exception perhaps of the *Morte d'Arthur*, the artistic endeavour, whether after plainness or elaboration, is more patent: we see the technical difficulties as they present themselves, and our interest in the whole matter is rather in the means than in the result. English prose, too, has the further limitation that it is for the most part translation, however important such a condition may have been for the future development of style. The French, on the other hand, impresses the modern reader not only as being more original, but as already showing something of the ease and suggestiveness of more advanced literary art. This is of course less true of a great number of the *Mémoires* of the period, which have small claim to be called literature, in France

as elsewhere, and also obviously untrue of the many Burgundian prose-books, which are overladen with the artificialities of the *Rhétoriqueurs*. The best examples have something of the actuality of the later prose style, and they express the movement of contemporary ideas in a way which we do not find so completely elsewhere during the century. If the Machiavellian wisdom of Commines sort rather ill with the mediæval form of his Chronicle, it but reflects the intellectual medley of the time. It is not the fault of Commines that he is less spectacular than Villehardouin, or even Froissart; the glamour of the Middle Ages had gone, and he had to busy himself with the diplomatic subtleties of Louis XI. and his quixotic successor's exploits among the princes and schemers of a New Italy. So, too, it is rather vain to judge the *Petit Jehan de Saintré* or the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* as failing to reproduce either the garrulous simplicity of the fabliau, or the subtlety of the later *conte*. Whatever conclusions we may reach regarding the style of this historical or imaginative prose, we must at least recognise that its consciousness or its faults are not, as in the English, the consciousness and faults of mere apprenticeship, else Commines or Antoine de la Salle could not have realised for us the complex mood of their times with such completeness and vividness.

Historical subjects.

The vast mass of historical and biographical prose which is crowded into the fifteenth century was the outcome partly of the cumulative influence of the models of the three preceding cen-

turies, expressed in the work of Villehardouin, Joinville, and Froissart, and partly of the opportunities afforded by the Hundred Years' War and by the demands of political partisanship during that struggle. This literature is more remarkable for its extent than for its quality. It has, despite its varied prejudices, no small historical value, because the counterswearing which such strong prejudices demand is sometimes more helpful to truth than slipshod honesty, and because there is at the root of all the partisanship an endeavour to weigh evidence, to make use of documents, and to attain a certain precision in judgment. These characteristics — the analogues to the didactic, philosophical, and rhetorical qualities in the poetry of the period—intimate that historical writing has lost the picturesqueness of the mediæval chronicles, and is bent on the task of explaining rather than of creating anew.

Episodical treatment.

It is characteristic of this historical prose that it deals with episodes, special periods, and biography, rather than with general accounts of the world or of France from her mythological origins. There are a few exceptions—to wit, the *Compendium supra Francorum gestis* (from Pharamond to A.D. 1491) by the humanist Robert Gaguin (1425-1502); the chronicle of England down to 1471 by Jehan de Wavrin; the *Fleur des histoires* (1460) by the Burgundian Jean Mansel; and the rifacimento of old French chronicles by the curé Pierre Cochon, dealing with the period from the twelfth to the fifteenth century. The curtailment in view is also to be noted

in the wretched rhymed chronicles[1] which linger on during the period; and it is further evidence of the tendency which we have already seen to be at work in the allegorical poetry, in the romance and ballad, and in the drama. It is perhaps remarkable that it should be so manifest in the historical prose, for it is also true that when the romances and fables were ultimately translated into prose, they generally grew longer and more prolix than they had been even in the earliest stages of their metrical form. The explanation must be, in the first place, that the prose chronicle was not the transformed rhymed chronicle, but a collateral form, and therefore, as yet at least, unaffected by the reactionary influence which attacked its neighbour; and, in the second place, that the almost exclusive interest in contemporary history limited the range of subject. The erratic variety in the political life of the age compelled its historians to busy themselves with what we should call monographs or 'short studies.' The episodical treatment and the large number of examples also point to a serious change in the function of historical literature. Like the other branches of letters it is more concerned with the actual and occasional, with the fact of the day and its lesson, and less with weary reiterations of legendary and antique story. These conditions too were strongly in favour of the vernacular: and it is therefore not strange that of all the 'histories' of the time but the merest portion is written in Latin. The above-named Gaguin wrote in Latin,

[1] See Buchon's *Collection*, xxiv. and xliii.

but with more of the affectation of Humanism than respect for mediæval tradition. The official historiographers of the Court of France, like the unnamed priest of Saint-Denis under Charles VI. or Jean Chartier under Charles VII., were compelled to use Latin, though Chartier translated his own work later, and his predecessor's was done into French by Jean Juvénal des Ursins. These with Thomas Basin, Bishop of Lisieux (1412-1491), author of a blustering chronicle of the reigns of Charles VII. and Louis XI., constitute the small band of writers in Latin: and all, except Gaguin, are "historians of their own times."

The Biographies.

A few of the remains are biographical rather than historical in the general sense, and of these the chief are the *Livres des faits et bonnes mœurs du sage roi Charles V.* by the poetess Christine de Pisan, the *Livre des faits du bon messire Jean le Maingre, dit Bouciquaut*, and the *Chronique du bon chevalier messire Jaques de Lalain*, usually ascribed to the poet Chastellain. All three are, from a literary point of view, retrospective, in that they are *apologiae* for the dying traditions of chivalry.[1] The *bons messires* are paladins rather than men of the fifteenth century, interested in the picturesque stir of tourneys and adventures, and the champions of belated ideals. The books are written for a purpose; but it is not the purpose of the *Bourgeois de Paris* or of Commines. Christine's treatise is a panegyric on her benefactor, who is, as her title hints, a hero (*des faits*), a good

[1] *Ante*, chap. iii.

knight (*des bonnes mœurs*), and a wise ruler (*sage*). She claims the artist's prerogative to mix her own colours and to disregard the facts which her more commonplace contemporaries saw, often too clearly. "Le texte de mon livre n'est que en louant les vertus, et parler des vices servit hors de mon propoz né, mais en tant comme doit estre présupposé le blasme des vices en louant les vertus."[1] There is a world of difference between this and the mental attitude of Commines; as when Sire Philippe passes a compliment on the Italians—"Et en ce cas faut parler à l'honneur des Italiens; car nous n'avons point trouvé qu'ils ayent usé de nulles poisons; et s'ils l'eussent voulu faire, à grande peine s'en fut-l'on sçu garder en ce voyage."[2] Messire Bouciquaut, who is described by some unknown companion, might have been one of Cervantes's models, for he had mad aspirations to excel in adventurous knighthood. His life[3] is at once more entertaining and more actual than the feminine eulogy of the wise King Charles. This is even more true of Chastellain's account of Jacques de Lalain,[4] which, despite its Burgundian rhetoric and extravagance, reproduces something of the note of the old chivalry: how (to quote some chapter-headings at random) Messire went to the King of Castile, and of the cheer and honour done to him and his knights; how he and two others fought in the lists with three Scots before the King of Scots; how he challenged an Englishman before the Duke of Burgundy; and so

[1] Part II. chap. xviii.
[2] Book VIII. chap. v.
[3] Coll. Michaud et Poujoulat, ii.
[4] Ed. Buchon, 1876.

on, through a hundred episodes of the kind, till his 'piteous' death by a cannon at the siege of Poncques. "Pareil de lui on n'eût sçu ni pu trouver en nulle terre plus parfait, plus preux, plus vaillant, ni plus hardi chevalier."[1] Like eulogy was passed on Charles the Bold and on Maximilian of Austria by Molinet, Chastellain's successor in the office of Burgundian historiographer; but there the sheer 'falutin' of the *rhétoriqueur* is untouched by old-world fancy. Besides these, there are a few biographers of smaller literary pretension, as Guillaume Gruel, who gave a dull account of his master Arthur, Count of Richemont and Duke of Brittany; Jean Cabaret d'Orville, author of a chronicle of Louis, Duke of Bourbon, from the memorials of Jean de Chateaumorand; and Guillaume Leseur, who wrote the life of Gaston IV., Count of Foix.

France and Burgundy.

Most of the activity in the writing of history was on the Burgundian side, and here, as in other departments of letters, the patronage of the "Dukes of the Occident" was provocative of better literary workmanship than we find at the court of even Louis XI. The French chronicles lack almost every quality of style; they are half-hearted and tedious. The Burgundian chronicles show the infection of their rhetorical environment, but, though they may be in some cases as dull as Le Bouvier or Chartier, and in others too passionately partisan, they less seldom fail to suggest the literary aspect of history. Commines, who enjoyed

[1] Chap. c. Many of the panegyrical epithets in the prose of this time are echoes of Marie de France.

the confidence alike of Burgundy and of France, stands apart as the author of a masterpiece which expresses, in a style of its own, the intellectual revolt against the mere azure and gold of the mediæval chronicle.

The French Chroniclers.

Jean de Roye's Chronicle of Louis XI.,[1] disguised by its seventeenth-century title of *Chronique scandaleuse*, may be described as a journal of Parisian affairs. It is full of details of all kinds of high antiquarian value; and among these the author has interspersed sundry explanations and reflections. It is of small literary account, but it shows naïveté in its presentment of the picture of the Paris under Louis XI., which makes it both superior to mere annals and more dignified than mere gossip. Still more dignified, but duller, is the account of the reign of Charles VI. by Jean Juvénal des Ursins, Archbishop of Rheims, which is but a translation or transcript of the Latin Chronicle of the anonymous 'Religieux de S. Denis.' Jean Chartier translated his own dreary Latin history of his master Charles VII., and seems to have been the editor of the important volume of the *Grandes Chroniques de France* which appeared in 1477. Another chronicle of the reign of Charles VII., by Gilles le Bouvier, Berry herald,[2] the *Gestes des nobles Françoys* by Guillaume Cousinot, chancellor to the Duke of Orléans, the *Chronique de la Pucelle* by his nephew Guillaume, lord of Montreuil, the chronicle by Noël de Fribois

[1] *Chroniques du très chrestien et victorieux Louys de Valois, unziesme de ce nom* (Michaud et Poujoulat, iv.)

[2] Wrongly ascribed to Alain Chartier in Du Chesne's edition (1617).

(1459), and others, have hardly any claim to be mentioned except among historical specialists; and even the account by Guillaume de Villeneuve of the three years of Charles VIII.'s Italian campaign (1494-97) suffers seriously by comparison with that of Commines.

The Burgundian group.

The Burgundians have at least four histories which are better than the best of the French—the *Journal d'un Bourgeois*, and the chronicles of Monstrelet, Chastellain, and La Marche: and the minor efforts of such as Salmon, Du Clercq, and even Le Fèvre, have probably higher literary value than the plodding annals of the Cousinots and Bouviers. The *Journal d'un Bourgeois* (1405-1449) is the Burgundian counterpart of the *Chronique scandaleuse*. The title is the making of a modern editor, for the book is anonymous, though suspicion has fallen on one Jean Chuffart, chancellor of Notre Dame.[1] Unlike the plain tale of the French Chronicle, it vibrates with passion and partisan hatred; and this rabid dislike of everything Armagnac not only is historically valuable as an index of the social and political ferment of the times, but supplies an interest of a literary kind. Other Burgundian historians produce their effects by mere rhetoric. The intensity of the Bourgeois helps him to happier results, to a truer picturesque, and at times to genuine pathos. We are sometimes reminded of the *expressive* art of Defoe's *Journal of the Plague*, as in the description of the famine-stricken capital, where the cry of the children is, "Hélas, je meurs de faim"; or in his account of

[1] Petit de Julleville, *Histoire*, ii. 325.

the despair of the villeins—"Mettons tout en la main du deable, ne nous chault que nous devenions, autant vault faire du pis qu'on peut comme du mieulx, mieulx nous vaulsist servir les Sarrazins que les chrestiens, et pour ce faisons du pis que nous pourrons; aussi bien ne nous peust on que tuer ou prendre; car, par le faulx gouvernement des traistres gouverneurs, il nous faut renyer femmes et enffans, et fouir aux bois comme bestes esgarées, non pas ung an ne deux; mais il y a jà quatorze ou quinze ans que ceste danse douloureuse commença."[1] We look in vain for passages so telling and direct in the more elaborate histories of Monstrelet or Chastellain. Enguerrand de Monstrelet (*c.* 1390-1453), provost of Cambrai, has left a chronicle of Burgundy, France, and England from 1400 to 1444, based to a large extent on the diplomatic documents to which he had access. He posed as the continuator of Froissart; but he lacks the historical insight and the literary art of his model, and he sins by dulness. Georges Chastellain, the literary dictator of the Burgundian court, to whom we have already referred,[2] shows a like learned fondness for documentary proofs. His style escapes the flatness of Monstrelet, but falls into the more characteristic Burgundian vice of rhetorical pomposity. His *Grande Chronique* (1419, 1420-1474), of which only portions are extant, is interesting to the literary historian more as illustrating

Georges Chastellain.

[1] Michaud et Poujoulat, ii. 670.

[2] See also chap. iii. His works are edited by M. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 8 vols., Brussels, 1863-66.

the mannerisms and conceits of his verses and of the works of his imitators than as showing any individual merit. His disciple the poet Jean Molinet[1] outdoes him, in his chronicle of the years 1476-1506, in "despumating the Latial verbocination," and shows but a sorry conception of the requirements of historical writing. Olivier de la Marche (*c.* 1426-1502), the companion-in-arms of the Comte de Charolois, wrote Memoirs of the period 1434-1488. His style too is florid, and his method is provoking; but there is a suggestion, if not of freshness, at least of honesty, which comes from his experiences as a knight and from a sincere chivalric sentiment. In the preface to his Introduction, and in another to the first book of his Memoirs,[2] he gives some interesting *personalia*, which illustrate the historical methods of the Burgundian school and point a contrast with his own. Literature is to him a cathartic: he is "worried and wearied" (*tanné et ennuyé*) by the company of his vices, feels labour is a good thing, and decides to write some books in the style of Memoirs. As for matter, he thrice gives warning that he will take only those things which he has himself seen and experienced: his friend Chastellain may with learned care collect reports and stories from all quarters, and touch them up in the privacy of his study. As for style, he despairs of his rude speech, which lacks the subtlety of Chastellain (*la perle et l'estoile de tous les historiografes*) or the rhetoric of Molinet. Some of his facts may be of service to these gentlemen ("if they survive

[1] *Ante*, p. 115.

[2] Ed. Buchon, pp. 297, 347.

him"), who will "embalm them in the everlasting fragrance of their rich and noble style." These admissions directly illustrate the double intention of the Burgundian historians: to attain a certain authenticity, or a partisan show of it, by the use of documents or personal recollection, and to make the account at the same time a 'literary' work. Even the plainer soldier La Marche, who will have nothing of hearsay, and despairs of his amateurish style, begins with an elaborate conceit describing his roebuck pleasure in chewing the cud of memory. This combination in the historical prose of the *Rhétoriqueurs* of a direct and first-hand treatment of the materials with a set purpose to attain certain artistic effects in that treatment, might be interpreted as preliminary evidence of the doctrine and method of the Renaissance; but we are precluded from this view by the reactionary character of their verse, in which, after all, their fullest energy is displayed. In the ranks of the minor Burgundian annalists are Pierre le Fruitier or Salmon,[1] the good hater of the house of Orléans; the above-named Jean de Wavrin,[2] who deals more exclusively with English matters; Pierre Cochon;[3] and Pierre de Fénin, who describes the period between 1407-1427. Jean le Fèvre de Saint-Remy (*c.* 1390-*c.* 1468), Toison d'or herald,[4] and

The minor Burgundians.

[1] Buchon's Collection, vol. xxv.

[2] Ed. Dupont (Soc. de l'histoire de France), 1858, and in the English Rolls Series, 5 vols. (1864-91).

[3] Ed. partly in Vallet de Viriville's edition of the *Chronique de a Pucelle.*

[4] Ed. Marchand (Soc. de l'histoire de France), 1876.

Mathieu d'Escouchi (*c.* 1420-*c.* 1482)[1] may be grouped as disciples of Monstrelet, the one as a perhaps unconscious pilferer from him, the other as his professed continuator. D'Escouchi improves on his model by moderating his rhetoric, and produces not infrequently those simpler effects which are the delight of the older French masters in history. His work has something of the political interest of the narrative of Commines, from the fact that he, like his greater contemporary, had the rich experience of both sides, Armagnac and Burgundian. The Memoirs of Jacques du Clercq, one of the household of Philip the Good, have the value which comes from his personal experience of the stirring period of 1448-67, but they have small claim to literary style in their arrangement.[2] These do not exhaust the Burgundian contributions to historical prose. Several of the anonymous chronicles of the time have been reprinted in M. Kervyn de Lettenhove's four volumes.[3]

The fundamental interest of the *Mémoires*[4] of Philippe de Commines (1445-1509) does not come

[1] Ed. Fresne de Beaucourt (Soc. de l'histoire de France), 1863. He treats of the period 1444-1461. His earlier editors call him De Coucy.

[2] Michaud et Poujoulat, vol. iii.

[3] *Chroniques relatives à l'histoire de Belgique sous la domination des ducs de Bourgogne*, Brussels, 1870-76. See also *Corpus chronicorum Flandriae*, vol. iii. (Petit de Julleville, *Hist.*, ii. 327). M. Fresne de Beaucourt gives an account of other chronicles, mostly of the provinces, in his *Histoire de Charles VII.* (vol. i., Introd.)

[4] Many editions, notably the collections of Buchon, Michaud et Poujoulat; also Chantelauze, Paris, 1881. His *Lettres et Négotiations* are edited by M. Kervyn de Lettenhove, 2 vols., Brussels, 1867-68.

from any positive achievement or direct intention of the author. Montaigne's admiration of the style, and even the enthusiasm of the sixteenth century for the historical insight of the book, must be modified in our modern perspective; but other qualities, of which the historian's immediate successors could not judge, give it an all-important place in European letters. If, therefore, it is not a classic in respect of literary accomplishment, it is an enduring witness of certain phases of the intellectual change which had come upon mediæval ideas. The work consists of two distinct sections, the first (Books I.-VI.) dealing with Burgundian affairs and the reign of Louis XI. during the period 1464-1483, the second (Books VII. and VIII.) almost entirely with Charles VIII.'s Italian expedition in 1494-95. It is a general history of the times rather than Memoirs in the restricted personal sense, but the title is justified by the identity of each sphere in the case of a man whose private views and acts are in reality as much the political history of his age as those of the Cardinal de Retz are the history of the Fronde.

Commines.

The incongruities of the *Mémoires* are not of the kind which we find in other works which belong to the Transition. The book is mediæval and non-mediæval, but not as in the case of Villon or Dunbar, where we see the traditional elements being transformed, more or less gradually, by the modern spirit. In Commines the old and the new jostle each other in a rather haphazard way; he has ideas and methods which preclude certain antique prejudices

and mannerisms, and yet these prejudices and mannerisms appear side by side with them. His history is a literary zigzag, fittingly expressing both the personal experiences of the man who is politician first and author afterwards, and the mere restlessness and incoherence of the national temper before the dawn of the Renaissance. Certain mediæval characteristics are apparent. The outward form, both in general scheme and in chapter-treatment, is that of the older chronicle. There is the antique fondness for moral observations and little homilies at each critical stage in the account—after-event wisdom on the fickleness of fortune and the deserts of foolish diplomacy. In the earlier chroniclers these sermonettes serve the purpose of resting-places, where writer and reader relax between the stirring episodes. In the *Mémoires* they do not quite mean the same. Sire Philippe is never out of breath, not even when he has a subject like the battle of Fornovo; his moralisings, when not a debt to convention, are but ceremonious treaties between public conscience and the apparent inconsistencies of an all-absorbing statecraft. So, too, his religious mood, in which he is most strongly in outward sympathy with mediæval sentiment, differs from the piety of his simpler predecessors. It is not the spiritual reaction of a schemer and worldling in his tired moments; nor is it the superstition of a mind like that of his hero, Louis XI.; nor is it plain hypocrisy, as Sainte-Beuve would hint.[1] Commines

His mediæval and non-mediæval elements.

[1] *Causeries du Lundi*, i. 245.

believes in God as he believes in man, and sees His hand as he sees the kingly hand in the affairs of humanity. Religion, just as good precepts, or diplomacy, or wealth, is one of the pieces in the game. If matters turn out badly, a masterly move of Heaven will, and must, be the explanation. His Divine Will is almost a political Providence, not the Providence of later generations of a more fatalistic turn; and it is not difficult to see that the pertinacity of his belief comes from a conviction that divine intervention is a political instrument and necessity. If it can outmanœuvre princes, it may checkmate a great king whose subjection of the feudal power may yet be in need of correction.[1] So far, therefore, the mediævalism of Commines is only apparent: had he had any fervour, it might have been more real.

His non-mediæval qualities are more obvious. 'Non-mediæval' is more pedantic than 'modern,' but it expresses an historical difference which is not suggested by the shorter word. For the modernity of Commines is of another kind than what we have recognised in the poets of the closing century; it does not follow the same process towards the Renaissance; in many respects, especially æsthetically, it is more negative than positive. A comparison between Commines and the master-chroniclers brings out a twofold distinction. He is the historian of the inner political life of France. Froissart saw the pomp and picturesqueness of national effort; even Chastellain and the Burgundians, who lived more in

[1] Cf. Book V. chap. xviii.

the atmosphere of diplomacy, concerned themselves with the outward shows of history. Commines had the advantage in experience—he knew too much. His art as a historian probably suffers more from the fulness of his experience than from his interest in the less pictorial side of his subject. In the second place, his attitude is critical. As a writer of memoirs he might have gone no further than to describe the intrigues and collect the gossip which the chroniclers of chivalry would pass by, but he reaches beyond this not only in his conception of individual character but in his psychology of History. He is the first since classical times to suggest the movement of historical ideas. In his analytic method we have the beginnings of political history in the broader modern sense; his reflections and axioms are our political science in embryo. Sometimes his philosophical interpretation plays pranks with his facts, but in the main he is accurate; and we could well forgive greater vagaries of his critical spirit in return for the insight which it has given into the complicated problem of character and policy at the dawn of modern times. Nowhere is his triumph more complete than in his study of Louis XI., which transcends, even in literary intensity, the masterpiece of Sir Walter Scott.

It is the individualism of the critical mood of the *Mémoires* which shows the width of separation from the mediæval chronicle. The subject is different—the history of the rise of personal monarchy—and the success of its presentation comes from the fact that

Commines, both as a thinker and as a writer, is in sympathy with the new ideas. His politics are anti-feudal, and therefore he has no stomach for chivalry: they are anti-bourgeois, for Flemish burghers were as arrogant as the great feudatories and might be more troublesome. Unlike Machiavelli, he is against the use of force as an argument: it implies a diplomatic weakness in the central authority, and the reliance of that authority, which should be self-sufficing, on other forces. His conception of a Divine Power is that of a theocracy: "n'est plus de prophètes qui parlent par sa bouche."[1] Nor had Commines the impersonal manner of the older narrators. That he ostensibly tells us so little of his own affairs must be explained by the fact that the story of his hero was written in the reign of Louis's successor Charles VII.; but it is only an apparent reticence. Joinville and Froissart might have written anonymously; they have no part in their tourneys and treaties. In the *Mémoires* every page is Commines.

His relation to the Renaissance.

If Commines may be said to express the *motif* of the Renaissance, he does so only on the intellectual side. He severely excludes all other considerations. Everything is a matter of calculation and adjustment—as in Machiavelli, non-moral rather than immoral. The atmosphere of the *Mémoires* is that of the *Prince*, with one difference, referred to above; and the earlier book may be said to supply the proofs and illustrations for the ordered theory of the later. Even in his examination of char-

[1] Book V. chap. xviii. (p. 149, ed. Buchon).

acter, Commines shows but the interest of mere experiment and analysis. He does not understand the broader intellectual sympathy of the Renaissance, expressed in its borrowed motto, "Homo sum, humani nihil a me alienum puto." In other words, he is deficient on the artistic side. The popularity of the *Mémoires* came from its philosophy, not, as in the case of Froissart, from its literary quality. It makes no pretence to give artistic pleasure, though it supplies ample material, even in its snippets of worldly wisdom, for the consideration of the artist. There is no show of enthusiasm, and there is but little humour. Occasionally we see the smile sardonic or diplomatic, as in the compliment to the Italians,[1] or in his description of Louis's cunning despatch of three hundred carts of wine to the English army in Amiens. "Il avoit ordonné, à l'entree de la porte de la ville deux grandes tables. . . . D'eau n'estoit nouvelles. A chacune de ces tables avoit fait seoir cinq ou six hommes de bonne maison, fort gros et gras, pour mieux plaire à ceux qui avoient envie de boire. . . ."[2] Nor are his omissions and inaccuracies due to any desire to produce or heighten an effect; they are rather the direct outcome of a selective habit which had grown with his experience as a confidential adviser.

His æsthetic weakness.

Commines was therefore to all intents indifferent to the style of his work. His expression of a hope that his friend the astrologer Angelo-Catto, Archbishop of Vienne, to whom he dedicates his book, may translate it into Latin, or of a

[1] *Ante*, p. 352. [2] Book IV. chap. ix.

belief that Monseigneur du Bouchage would have "couched it in better language," are mere compliments; for he at once adds that no one could have a richer recollection of the events than himself, or, presumably, could better explain the complexities of the national story. His preoccupation with the statement and interpretation of facts left no opportunity, had he had the capacity, for the graces of composition. It may be doubted whether he shows even the grasp of method which we find in his more rhetorical contemporaries. He is certainly cold and colourless, and if he is interesting—apart from the solid attraction of contemporary narrative by the most competent of contemporaries—it is for that quality of 'good sense' as understood by the eighteenth century, which often helps him to turn a commonplace to good account, or to fix a character.

The remaining French prose may be grouped into three classes, in an ascending scale of importance—translations; didactic pieces, including sermons, moral treatises, and political tracts; and tales. In the first, France had as yet no serious interest, at least none of the enthusiasm which characterises contemporary England. There are few worthy successors to Pierre Berçuire, or to Nicole Oresme, the translator of Aristotle, and others under the munificent Charles V. Some of the energy which might have been employed in this work was, as in the case of Jean de Montreuil, turned to Humanistic Latin. Three, or perhaps four, writers may be named;

The Translators.

Nicolas de Gonesse, translator of Valerius Maximus (1401), Jean de Courtecuisse, who rendered Seneca's *De quatuor virtutibus* (1403), Laurent de Premierfait, who gave versions of the *De Senectute* and the *De Amicitia* and of Boccaccio's *De Casibus* (1409) and the *Decameron* (1414), and Vasco Fernandez, who translated Quintus Curtius (1464) and the *Cyropaedia* (1470). All, except the last, were in the interest of the Duke of Berry: Vasco Fernández, Count of Lucena — the "vertueux escuyer Vas de Lusane, portugalois" of Olivier de la Marche's Introduction to his *Mémoires* — represents the Burgundian side. Berçuire's more famous work, the *Rommans de Titus Livius*, did not appear in print till 1487, when it was eked out from the *De Bello Punico* of Leonardo d'Arezzo by a certain Jean de Begue, a fiscal officer of Charles VII.

The Sermons.

In the didactic prose the sermons are of considerable importance as a reflection, direct and clear, of contemporary thought in its mixed mood of *bourgeois* realism and symbolism. The intimate and often ribald tone of the preachers was in no sense a direct result of the intellectual conditions of the century. Dante knew the pulpiteer who worked "con motti e con iscede,"[1] and Boccaccio has immortalised the ingenuities of Father Onion.[2] The type was common enough, but in the fifteenth century it seemed to sort more with the general spirit of the time, and to be more confirmed in its fondness for the

[1] *Parad.*, xxix. 114.

[2] *Decam.*, vi. 9.

personal and extravagant. Gerson, at the close of the fourteenth century, had, in his own sermons and by his influence, modified this tendency, and had added a certain dignity and propriety; but the restraint was not lasting. We do find passages in Menot, Maillard, and Raulin, which are impressive by their rhetoric and religious sincerity, but their historical and literary value to us is based on other considerations: on their actuality, their habit of burlesque and satire, their historic allegory, their pedantry—in a word, on their general lack of seriousness, as Gerson or Bossuet understood the term. In this respect they exercised a strong influence in determining the later prose manner. Rabelais is their successor, and makes use of their material in the elaboration of his great comedy of seriousness. And his less able successors, Henri Estienne, in the *Apologie pour Hérodote*, and Beroalde de Verville, in the notorious *Moyen de Parvenir*, continue their work in the spirit and often in the letter. Their affinity with the contemporary popular drama is striking, not only in their tone, but in their method.

Parallelism with the drama.

Menot's sermon on the Magdalen might be a recitation of the stage-piece referred to in a previous chapter; the lawyers, *écorcheurs*, and wantons who are held up to ridicule are the self-same evil-doers of the Moralities and Farces. So marked is the parallelism that we are almost tempted to think that the Church was making a further effort to command public interest by adopting the tricks of the more popular art, and making the "drum ecclesiastic" rival the noisy *tabourin* of Du Pontalais. Voltaire's

apophthegm that the monologue has always been jealous of the dialogue[1] thus acquires a deeper and more specific critical value in its application to the fifteenth-century preachers. As an aid to the literary interpretation of the period these sermons are perhaps unique: Latimer's value to the antiquary and student of society, or the metaphorical licence of the early Scots reformers, is in a sense merely accidental. They are not so full of historical detail, and they are certainly not in intimate touch with the progression of a national idea. One caveat is perhaps necessary, that this popular preaching is not mere clerical clownage, though then as now there might be pulpit-fools plying their wit. The Parisians of Louis XI.'s reign could not resent it in the spirit in which the English poet denounces that "God's ambassador" who would

> "address
> The skittish fancy with facetious tales,
> When sent with God's commission to the heart."

At its worst it would have been, had they thought of it, but a breach with the traditional propriety of saints like Bernard, or of learned doctors like Gerson. And it is not frivolous to imagine that the preacher reached the heart of the times, such as they were, by the force of his satire and burlesque, as much as by the pathetic pictures which he drew of the sorrows of widows and orphans.

The fundamental characteristic of both Michel

[1] *Des divers changemens arrivés à l'art tragique*, 1761.

Menot (1450-1518) and Olivier Maillard (1440-1503)[1] is emphasis, in the former rather in metaphor, in the latter in satirical invective. It is the Menot of the *Apologie pour Hérodote* who, in charging the wealthy cits with luxury, said of their scarlet gowns, "je croy que si on les serroit bien au pressoir, on en verroit sortir le sang des poures gens dedans lequel elles ont esté teintes." And it is Menot who, in treating the familiar theme of the passing of all things, re-expresses the very sentiment which we have found in Villon, Dunbar, and Jorge Manrique. "At this moment," he says, "I am here; next year you will have another preacher. Where is King Louis, once so redoubted? and Charles, who in the flower of his youth made Italy tremble? Alas! earth by now has rotted his body. Where are all those damozels of whom the world has spoken so much? . . . Mélusine and so many other celebrated beauties?"[2] His contemporary, Maillard, also a Franciscan and vicar-general of that order, and confessor to Charles VIII., was allowed a licence of speech, even with Louis XI., which few ecclesiastics have enjoyed. He spared neither nobles nor *bourgeois*. His sermon at Bruges before the Archduke

Menot and Maillard.

[1] See the *Apologie pour Hérodote, passim* (ed. Ristelhuber, Paris, 1878). Menot's Magdalen sermons were edited by Labouderie, Paris, 1832. Maillard's complete works appear in the publications of the "Société des bibliophiles bretons" (ed. A. de la Borderie, Nantes, 1877).

[2] *Sermones quadragesimales Turonis declamati*, quoted by Géruzez (*Litt. franç.*, i. 247).

Philip, so often quoted, is an excellent example of the mediæval philippic in full blast. Elsewhere he exhorts some good folks to almsgiving, in these inviting words, "O gros goddons, damnés, infâmes, écrits au livre du diable, voleurs et sacrilèges, . . . écoutez le conseil que vous donne David; faites l'aumône."[1] Jean Raulin, a Cluniac and a Doctor of the Sorbonne, was less strenuous than the friars. He has perhaps been saved from oblivion by the humorous use which Rabelais makes of his sermon *De viduitate* in Panurge's consultations with Pantagruel and Friar John on the question of marriage.[2] Comparatively few of these sermons are extant in vernacular versions. The Latin of the majority, however, is so strongly flavoured with French idiom and so full of macaronic phrases —"plaisans entrelardemens," as Henri Estienne has it — that it is still a debated question whether the sermons were delivered in the vulgar, or in Latin, or in the mixed style. Estienne's assumption that this macaronic form was the direct invention of the preachers is interesting, both as early evidence and as suggesting a further analogy between the methods of the clergy and those of the *farceurs*. It is quite clear that before more clerical and learned audiences Latin would still hold its own; but it seems reasonable to think that on other occasions the Church would find it necessary to grapple with the problem of

The macaronic language.

[1] Quoted by M. Petit de Julleville, *Hist.*, ii. 254.

[2] Bk. III., chaps. ix., xxvii., &c.

the vernacular in much the same way as the playwrights and poets had done.[1]

Didactic prose.

The remaining examples of the didactic prose consist chiefly of moral and political treatises. As literature or as philosophy they are of small interest, but they illustrate the steady advance of prose into the hitherto undisputed territory of verse. This may have been one of the effects of the influence of the preachers, especially of Gerson; but it is none the less remarkable that poets of the type and standing of Alain Chartier or Christine de Pisan should have so readily turned their backs on the couplet, especially in works which were not confined to technical matters, like the rules of the Lists or the arts of housekeeping, or in text-books more or less of the style of the Chevalier de la Tour Landry's "Advice to his daughters" (1372) or the dull *Ménagier de Paris* (1392). What has been already said of the verse of Alain Chartier, Christine de Pisan, and Martial d'Auvergne[2] may excuse detailed criticism of their prose. Chartier's chief efforts are the *Curial*, the *Quadrilogue invectif*, and *L'Esperance, ou Consolation des Trois Vertus*. The first treats anew with well-ordered satire the favourite mediæval subject *De Curialium Nugis*, and proclaims in pleasant rhetoric the virtues of private life and independence. The *Quadrilogue* has the familiar theme of the vanity of earthly things;

[1] See M. Piaget's excursus on the language of the Sermons in M. Petit de Julleville's *Hist.*, pp. 218-229.

[2] *Ante*, chap. iii.

and the author is inspired to his work by the sorrows of stricken France. Again, like Menot and greater contemporaries, he cries, "Where is Nineveh the great, whose circuit was three days' journey; what has become of Babylon, built so ingeniously to outlast man, but now the nest of serpents? . . . In my heart I feel that the hand of God is upon us."[1] Then the author falls asleep, and dreams that he sees the figure of France, and hears her addressing her three children, the knight, the priest, and the poor man. In the speeches of these and in Dame France's answer Chartier preaches a political sermon to his time on the need of a united effort against enemies and a kindlier spirit among themselves: the nobles must learn loyalty, the church wisdom, all three obedience to God and His viceroys. The details of the idea are familiar to English students, for the anonymous *Complaynt of Scotlande* is closely modelled on Chartier's treatise, and edited to meet the requirements of sixteenth-century Scotland. *L'Esperance*, or the Consolation of Faith, Hope, and Charity, is an onslaught, in prose mixed with verse, on the causes of the national miseries, especially on the folly of the Church and the indifference of the nobles. It is not original either in its emphasis or in the details of the popular distress (*"en villes et en carrefours n'oroit on que cris et pleurs"*); but in its unhesitating attack on the Church it has much of the vigour of the later Reformation pamphlets. Christine de Pisan's prose-work, apart from the History of Charles V. referred to above,[2]

[1] Ed. 1617, p. 404. [2] *Ante*, p. 351.

included the *Cité des Dames*, a cyclopædic panegyric of Great Women from early times down to her own day; the *Trésor de la Cité des Dames*, an interesting handbook of ethics and etiquette bearing on every class of woman from the lady of quality to the lady of pleasure; a collection of letters written in her conflict with Charles VI.'s secretaries on the *Roman de la Rose*,[1] which she dedicated to the yet respectable Isabeau of Bavaria; and other miscellaneous pieces, for the most part compilations. When she is not defending her sex against literary enemies, she is pleading for the "povres petits alaittans" and the "mères veufves," whom war and pestilence had sunk in misery. She has some of the fervour, but less of the eloquence, which inspired Gerson, as in his speech in the name of the University of Paris, delivered before Charles VI. in 1405: "le povre homme n'aura pain à manger, sinon par adventure un peu de seigle ou d'orge; sa povre fame gerra, et auront quatre ou six petit enfants au fouyer qui par adventure sera chauld, demanderont du pain, crieront à la rage de faim; la povre mère si n'aura que bouter ès dens que un peu de pain où il y ait du sel." French didactic prose profited not a little from this passionate and universal appeal of poets, preachers, historians, and playwrights; it found new words, turned fresh phrases, gained confidence in its art, even though that art might yet remain tentative in the sheer splutter and vehemence of the emotions by which it was prompted.

[1] *Ante*, p. 90.

The prose fiction of the period presents two aspects. There is, on the one hand, the recasting of the rhymed *Chansons de geste* in the prose forms transmitted to us in the early issues of the printing-press, and, on the other, the original and important works associated with the name of Antoine de la Salle. In the former there is no literary merit. M. Léon Gautier, our chief authority on the French epopees, has described with learned passion, almost with tears, the descent of the original poetic ideals of the eleventh and twelfth centuries to the travesties of the eighteenth century, when Roland has been transformed into a buck delighting in sentimentalities and the cotillon. The late fourteenth and the fifteenth centuries represent the middle stage in this decadence. The tales are as yet untouched by the maudlin *sensibilité* which they express in the well-meant *Bibliothèque des romans* (1777-78), but their literary vigour is sadly weakened by an intolerable verbosity. This followed naturally, as a result common to all transliterations of verse into prose, and more especially as an elaboration of the editorial ideas of those who had rhymed the early assonanced versions. The *chansons* had grown drearily long and dull, though they did not appear so to the burgesses and peasants of that day, if we may judge from the number of copies which were sent out from the early presses in France and elsewhere. The older manuscripts, which were ever for the few, were forgotten, and the conditions of transmission and recitation no longer held: and so these good folks turned to the *remaniements* with the zest of a new-

The prose Chansons de geste.

found pleasure. In these circumstances it is vain to look not only for any qualities of style or invention, but for any advance in the mere exercise of the language as a literary medium. In England even dulness of this kind would have served some purpose in suppling the vernacular, but in France prose had had a longer life and had already done better things.

The artistic retrogression in the prose *Chansons de geste*, not only from their original forms but from the pleasing tales of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, is made clear by contrasting them with contemporary works like *Petit Jehan de Saintré*, the *Quinze Joies de Mariage*, or the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles*, even though we allow that these are exceptional in merit and perhaps the effort or inspiration of a single writer, Antoine de la Salle. His life (*c.* 1398-*c.* 1462) was full of opportunity of the most eclectic kind. Towards his twenty-fifth year he resided in Rome in the midst of that intellectual society of which his friend Poggio was an ornament; thereafter, at the court of the good king René of Anjou, where he varied his lessons to his pupil, the Duke of Calabria, by taking part in the literary amusements of his master; still later, as tutor of the Luxembourg princes at the Burgundian Court of Philip the Good. Did we not know to the contrary, we might have pictured him as one of those amiable pedants who upheld with astrologers and chaplains the learned ambitions of the great lords of France, for he wrote for the young Duke of Calabria one of those encyclopædic treatises in which the Middle Ages

Antoine de la Salle.

found delight. This he punningly called his *Salade*, but it was not the true *salade à l'Antoine* of the *contes*, in which he mixed his 'good herbs' to other recipes and to better purpose.

Petit Jehan de Saintré.

The *Petit Jehan de Saintré*,[1] which is undoubtedly his, is one of the most remarkable books of the Transition, both for its accomplishment in prose style and for its literary intention. It is a story of the love of a young knight, whose name is borrowed from a real Jehan of the fourteenth century, for a fair lady of the Court, called La Dame des Belles-Cousines. His good qualities commend him to all, and his suit—though the lady is perhaps the more assertive—is successful. The inevitable parting ensues, and the mistress, during the absence of her knight, forgets her promise and succumbs to the personal attractions of an athletic abbot who lives in great splendour near her château. The remainder of the story is concerned with the youth's return, the discovery of his disgrace, and his fantastic but successful efforts to punish the sinners. The tale is slight in construction, and is inferior in this respect to many of the farces, and especially to *Pathelin*, which has been ascribed, without any reason, to the same author; yet, even despite this and its digressions and inequalities, it attracts by the unexpected ease of its narrative and by the fulness of its contemporary flavour. From beginning to end it is essentially satirical, exposing the extravagances of chivalry, the worldliness of the

[1] Ed. Guichard, Paris, 1843.

Church, and, in especial, the frailty of woman. Some have considered the book as if it were in two parts, or, rather, inspired by two different motives: the first—in which Jehan is to be taken as a sort of Bayard—in honour of platonic love and chivalric ideals; the second, a cynical exposure of the unreality of mediæval sentiment. M. Petit de Julleville goes so far as to ask what pleasure could Antoine de la Salle have found in transforming a story of the heroic and pure into a cynical fabliau; and he explains the disaster as the revenge of the *bourgeois* spirit.[1] We are, in this view, to see in the author a Jean de Meun, who is facile enough to give us also the Lorrisian view by way of preliminary to his unchivalrous romance. The satire, it is true, becomes more emphatic towards the close, but the effect produced is cumulative rather than antithetic. From the very first, when page Jehan drops the platter as his eye falls on the ample charms of the Dame des Belles-Cousines, the story has a fifteenth-century air. The working up of the details of the chivalric life, however fascinating in execution, is always from the outside, for an artistic purpose, and without any direct sympathy on the part of the author. The so-called first part is not even a *pastiche*. I doubt whether Jehan has the sincerity of Cervantes's mad hero; but Antoine de la Salle's intention is certainly never far from that of the Spaniard when gibing at the follies and inconsistencies of a shattered tradition. Like Cervantes, and less like

[1] *Hist.*, ii. 396.

the *farceurs*, poets, and other story-tellers of his age, he clothes his *bourgeois* criticism in gentlemanly garb, and thus brings greater discredit on the objects of his attack than if he had blustered with the tavern-wits.

The same qualities characterise the *Quinze Joies de Mariage*,[1] and tend to confirm the attribution of that work to Antoine de la Salle. It is a satire on marriage, or rather on women, though the author is so cynical as to say that it is written in their honour and at the special request of some of their sex. In a series of sketches, fine alike in detail and breadth of treatment, he pictures the worries of the unfortunate man who is "en la nasse bien embarrassé." "La usera sa vie en languissant tous jours et finera misérablement ses jours." The consolation offered to the victims is that Paradise may be gained by this suffering and the mortification of the flesh. The book is a fifteenth-century *Physiologie du Mariage*, superior by its originality of treatment and variety of style to any of the innumerable theses of the age on this absorbing topic. And it is not unreasonable to place it in competition before modern readers with Balzac's more elaborate but rather dull 'analytical study.'

The Quinze Joies de Mariage.

[1] Ed. Jannet (*Bibl. Elzév.*), 1857. The number "fifteen" probably comes from the "Fifteen Joys of our Lady," referred to by Christine de Pisan and others. *The Fifteen O's, and other Prayers* was printed by Caxton, in 1490. The English version of the *Quinze Joies* in 1682, under the title of the *Fifteen Comforts of Matrimony*, was the first of a long series of "Fifteens."

The *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* (1432)[1] was for long attributed to Louis XI., and not inappropriately, as far as the prevailing tone of deceit and cruelty is concerned; but the weight of evidence is against his authorship and strongly in favour of that of Antoine de la Salle, who is referred to in the text as the author of one of the stories. The book is Burgundian in origin; many of the names are those of Philip the Good's courtiers; and the collection is dedicated to that prince. Antoine de la Salle's intimacy with Poggio favours the assumption that these *facetiae*, or the idea of working them up, may have been inspired from that quarter. In the dedication the author admits an Italian influence, and tells us that the title at least is borrowed from the Hundred Tales of Boccaccio's *Decameron*. The only argument against Antoine de la Salle's responsibility in the matter is that the extreme licence of the stories is unredeemed by the delicate irony and reserve of his accredited works.

The Cent Nouvelles nouvelles.

As a Burgundian composition, intended for the amusement of the élite of that Court, it is rather remarkable. The stories are direct and simple in style, unaffected by the pedantic rhetoric of the ducal court; and they are intensely *bourgeois* in spirit. There is no faëry, or chivalry, or any of the tricks of romance in the framework of these tales: we have the personnel of the *novelle*, gay merchants, lusty dames, and naughty serving-maids, bent on practical joking

[1] Ed. Wright in *Bibl. Elzév.*, 1858. A handy edition is published by Garnier, 1893.

and cuckoldry. If there is anything 'Burgundian' in these stories it is in their flamboyant sensuality, in their ingenious elaboration of every variety of intrigue. They are an overdrawn picture of contemporary libertinism, just as the golden phrases of Chastellain are overstrained art. This exaggeration is probably to a large extent the result of the fact that the book is unoriginal, a redressing of the old fun of the *Gesta Romanorum* and the *Decameron*, with borrowings from the Italian *novellieri* and the *Facetiae* of Poggio, and an admixture of some of the traditional details of the fabliaux. It is only in this editorial sense that the epithet *nouvelles* is justified. The morbid ingenuity nowise affects the literary expression, which is direct and simple, and never loses itself in metaphorical pruriency. The popularity of the *Cent Nouvelles nouvelles* thus served in a positive way the artistic interests of French prose, a fact which cannot be so readily assumed in the case of later classics among the *contes pour rire.*

CHAPTER XII.

A PROSE MISCELLANY: SOUTHERN EUROPE AND GERMANY.

ITALIAN PROSE—THE LETTERS—THE "VITE"—THE SERMONS—TRANSLATIONS — HISTORY — THE "NOVELLE" — MASUCCIO GUARDATO — 'IL GRASSO LEGNAIUOLO'—'REALI DI FRANCIA'—ALBERTI—HIS TREATMENT OF THE VERNACULAR — 'HYPNEROTOMACHIA POLIPHILI'—ITS HISTORICAL POSITION IN "MOTIF" AND IN LANGUAGE —SPANISH PROSE — THE CHRONICLES — THE 'LIBRO DEL PASO HONROSO'—OTHER TYPES—THE 'CÁRCEL DE AMOR'—THE GERMAN ROMANCES—'TILL EULENSPIEGEL'—ITS SATIRICAL "MOTIF"—MINOR GERMAN PROSE—THE 'DE IMITATIONE CHRISTI'—A CONTEMPORARY CONTRAST.

Italian prose.

FIFTEENTH-CENTURY Italy is not so seriously concerned with the problem of a vernacular prose, either as to its rights to usurp the subject-matter of verse, or as to its claims as an instrument of style. The remains are ample, but they are, with but few exceptions, of subsidiary importance, and rather indirectly literary in intention. It is not till the sixteenth century that a definite attempt is made to realise the purpose of Dante's great declaration, and to carry out Boccaccio's experiment to its logical conclusion. The retarding influence was Latin, which

had attracted the literary mind both earlier and more irresistibly in Italy than elsewhere. In the full flood of the Renaissance both the great and the small writers were swept into the ocean of classicism; the work of men like Æneas Sylvius, or Pontano, than whom none express more fully the spiritual intention of the age, is entirely in Latin; Alberti, Politian, Bruni, Palmieri, Collenuccio, Sannazaro, and Savonarola, many indeed of high repute in the vulgar, write more often in Latin, and set greater store by their scholarship; even the chronicles, which in France were already almost exclusively in the mother-speech, remain the history-books of monks and learned persons. Italian prose, such as it was, had to fall back upon the models of the *trecentismo*. Boccaccio's more ornate style was of small avail, for, its object being to attune Italian prose to classical rhythm, there was every reason, especially in the circumstance of the Revival, to accept the classical tradition in its entirety. Vernacular prose is therefore handicapped both in style and in subject, in the one showing, at the hands of writers like Belcari, an arrested development, and in the other a lack of that material which might inspire more strenuous effort.

If we omit three authors of exceptional interest—to whom we shall return in this chapter—the entire *corpus* of Italian prose is concerned with the minor and unsustained matters of literature. The greatest activity is in letters, short biographies or 'Vite,' sermons, and the like. There are very few translations, and but few *novelle*. The chronicles are more

numerous, but they are concerned with small periods or limited subjects. Most of the prose pieces are short and occasional in tone, with the outstanding exception of the romance of the *Reali di Francia.*

The epistolary and biographical material is, taken as a whole, the most interesting. In both varieties Italy takes the lead in point of time and in accomplishment. Valuable as the *Paston Letters* are to the English historian and antiquary, they are too matter-of-fact to deserve the epithet 'literary,' and they are unique. 'Lives' of the type of Cavendish's *Wolsey* belong to the next century; and in France, the *Mémoires*, which we have seen were consecrated to certain reigns, are biographical only in the loose sense that a prince's life is the political history of his time.

The Letters. The Italians made more of the Letter; made it, in many cases, the medium for the utterance of thoughts on all kinds of literary and political matters, and even collected the more notable examples into volumes for popular edification.[1] This was in all probability a direct effect of the stimulus which Humanism had given to the epistolary style, as shown so emphatically in the great body of Latin correspondence from Gasparino, the protégé of Filippo Maria Visconti, early in the century, down to the more Ciceronian days of Filelfo and the later Humanists. Lorenzo's best vernacular prose is contained in a letter to Federigo of Aragon, which is

[1] As in the dainty volumes of *Lettere volgari di diversi nobilissimi huomini, et eccellentissimi ingegni, scritte in diverse materie,* collected and printed by Paolo Manuzio at Venice (revised edition, 1549).

really a critical account of Tuscan poetry. His friend Politian has left many letters, all, however, more or less infected by a macaronic taint; and the same may be said of Pulci and Boiardo. But the most remarkable examples are the work of two women, S. Caterina da Siena[1] and Alessandra Macinghi-Strozzi (1407-1471).[2] S. Catherine's letters preserve the full flavour of the fourteenth-century Tuscan, and are permeated with that religious ecstasy which we find in the contemporary lyrics, and especially in the Lauds. Her literary quality is the more noteworthy, for we should look last of all in emotional wildings like her for any attempt at the orderly beauties of a cultivated style. Alessandra's seventy-two letters, addressed to her exiled sons, have a more domestic interest, but no less sincerity of style, and are in marked contrast with the gauds and affectations of even the workaday language of the upper classes of her day. Besides these there are the diplomatic letters, such as the Florentine Rinaldo degli Albizzi (1370-1442) wrote and preserved in his *Commissioni per il Comune*. The 'Vite,' which appear to have been the staple of the printing-presses in the next century, were already a popular form both with scholars like Bruni who condescended to write in the vernacular, and with less learned persons like the bookseller Vespasiano. The Lives of Dante and Petrarch are the only important vernacular remains of the humanist

The Vite.

[1] Ed. N. Tommaséo, Florence, 1860.

[2] Ed. C. Guasti (*Lettere di una gentildonna fiorentina del secolo* XV.), Florence, 1877.

Leonardo Bruni (1369-1444), and were probably suggested by his translations from Plutarch. Belcari, the author of the *Abramo ed Isac*,[1] wrote the *Vita del beato Giovanni Colombini* (1449), in which he revives the simpler style of the *trecentismo*; and Antonio Manetti, the author of the *Novella del Grasso legnaiuolo*, added thereto a life of Brunelleschi, and left also an account of the famous men in Florence about the close of the century, and a *notizia* on the poet Guido Cavalcanti. Of less literary merit, but of greater historical interest, is the volume of *Vite* (1493) written by Vespasiano da Bisticci (1421-1498), the great bookseller and librarian. He has put on record his reminiscences of the foremost men of his day with whom it was his luck to come in contact in the course of his professional career. His genuine love of letters, and his admiration of the finer elements in the intellectual alloy of the Renaissance, do him greater honour than his opposition to the new typography. His style is praised for its simple sincerity: it avoids the acrimonies and pomposities of many of the later bookmen who turned author. Others, like Filippo Villani, the nephew of the historian of Florence, commemorated the illustrious of their city, but in Latin.

The Sermons.

Of the Sermons the chief come from S. Bernardino and Savonarola. Some are found in more unlikely quarters, as among the prose remains of Politian. The Minorite friar S. Bernardino (1380-1444) represents in the sermons which he preached in Siena the well-known type of church

[1] *Ante*, p. 302.

orator of the age, ecstatic and strenuous, fond of illustrations and metaphor, often familiar.[1] In Savonarola, on the other hand, asceticism and a strong political instinct compelled a more severe and dignified tone. He does not wheedle his audience by fables and stories with a moral, but delivers himself at once of his message as God's prophet and paralyses all doubt by the cumulative intensity of argument and passion. Yet it is easy to see that the effect came largely from the personality and the living voice, and that as literature in the eyes of an unawed posterity these sermons do not excel the more *bourgeois* piety of Menot or Bernardino. There are but few translations: all the likely material would have been found in the literature of Greece and Rome, and to re-fashion it in the newer speech was to run counter to the enthusiasm of the age. Yet Boiardo translated the *Golden Ass* of Apuleius, the *Cyropaedia*, and portions of Herodotus and Lucian. History as understood by Poggio or Bembo is the monopoly of the language of Livy. The local chronicle is more often in the mother dialects, especially in Florence, where there are writers like Gino Capponi (*c.* 1350-1421), who describes the Ciompi Rebellion, Goro Dati (1363-1435), who has left a history of his city from 1380 to 1405 and a diary *Il libro segreto*, Giovanni Cavalcanti, who has traced the Albizzi-Medici struggle, and Giovanni Morelli (1371-1444); and elsewhere, in the History of Milan by Bernardino Corio, of Perugia

Translations.

History.

[1] *Cf.* p. 367.

by Francesco Matarazzo or Maturanzio, and of Naples by Pandolfo Collenuccio. Savonarola's treatise on the Government of Florence, written in 1498, is rather an eloquent attack on the political and social evils of tyrannies, and belongs in intention, if not in scientific workmanship, to the later phase of Italian historical work, shown in the remarkable series of political studies from Machiavelli and Guicciardini to Segni and Pitti.

In the matter of prose fiction the period is also an interregnum. The remains are of considerable merit, but they are so scanty that it might appear as if the effects of Boccaccio and Sacchetti had had sudden pause, and were to lie dormant till the stirring of the *novellieri* of the sixteenth century. Yet the inference would be wrong, for we have seen that the spirit of the *novella* was at work in modifying the literary mood of Italy, and in other quarters than in its own *genre*. The paucity is more apparent than real, on account of the predilection of the age to versify the tales, both old and new. The *Novellino* of Masuccio, the more 'popular' *Il Grasso*, a *novella* by Pulci, and another by Bruni, constitute, with the favourite romance *I Reali di Francia*, the prose fiction of the fifteenth century. Masuccio Guardato of Salerno, a nobleman at the Neapolitan Court, has left a collection of fifty tales,[1] on themes of the kind which Boccaccio had chosen. He acknowledges his discipleship to Boccaccio, though he shows that it is subsidiary to an intense admiration for Juvenal. The genial

The Novelle.

Masuccio Guardato.

[1] Ed. Settembrini, Naples, 1874.

fancy of the Florentine would have been sacrificed in its adjustment to Neapolitan life for stronger passion and greater licence, but the process is arrested in the *Novellino* by the vigour, we might say the ferocity, of its satiric purpose. Masuccio has a strong, dramatic touch; and when he engages in the buffooneries and intrigues of the loose-living folk of the Court and the taverns, it is rather as a spectator in search of effects than as a sympathetic pleasure-giver. As a constructive artist, therefore, he is inferior to Boccaccio; as he is also, in the opinion of Italian criticism, in his quality of style. The Florentine *Il Grasso legnaiuolo* is of a more popular type. There is some reason to associate it with Antonio Manetti (1423-1497), the cultured friend of Benivieni, Ficino, and Brunelleschi. It is of the stuff of the ordinary farce. The fun is cleverly developed from the simple idea that one of the characters is convinced by his comrades that he is really another person. Pulci in his story on the silly Sienese has a purely satirical intention, and acknowledges the interesting fact that he is influenced by Masuccio.[1] The evergreen *Reali di Francia* belongs to the different category of popular romance. According to Signor Rajna[2] it was written about 1420; and there is a strong presumption that its author was Andrea da Barberino, who had assiduously prepared other sections of the Charlemagne cycle. The *Reali* is of great historical

Il Grasso legnaiuolo.

Reali di Francia.

[1] See Symonds, iv. 220, n.

[2] *I Reali di Francia*, Bologna, 1872, vol. ii. (Vandelli), 1892.

interest both retrospectively and in the future development of Italian literature. It marks the definite absorption of the Charlemagne story as a national 'matter' at the expense of the Arthurian 'matter' of the earlier "Tavolo Ritonda" and the "Cento Novelle." Yet it is only a portion, a compound of a fourteenth-century *Fioravante*, discovered by Signor Rajna, and a *Buovo d'Antona*, a variant of the ubiquitous *Beuves d'Hanstonne*; and it is curious that it is the only fragment of the romantic work of Andrea da Barberino or others which has maintained its popularity and its first prose form. Other romances, like the *Spagna*, were in rhyme, or, like the *Nerbonesi*, either had a limited vogue or were transformed more readily into the later manner of the Romantic Revival. The dulness of the *Reali*, due especially to its elaboration of quasi-historical and genealogical detail, makes its survival more remarkable, though it may explain its escape from the grasp of Boiardo and Tasso. But it is fair to think that the very popularity of this poem, rather than that of any of its less assertive and perhaps no less matter-of-fact neighbours, inspired a later generation of poets in the romantic stories of the Paladins of France.

A superior interest, both individual and comparative, attaches to the prose work of Alberti, to the *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* of Francesco Colonna, and to the *Arcadia* of Sannazaro.[1] Leon Battista Alberti (? 1407-1472), an official in the confidence of the Papal Court, was a man of remarkable mental and physical

[1] For Sannazaro see chap. iv., pp. 146-148.

vigour, and in wideness of culture a representative of the Italian Renaissance at its best. Besides his Latin works, the comedy *Philodoxeos*, the treatises *De pictura*[1] and *De jure* and others, and his Italian sonnets, eclogues, and minor poetical pieces, he has left books in vernacular prose, which are of importance both as expressions of the intellectual trend of his age and as preludes in the development of prose style.[2] The treatise entitled *Della Famiglia*, in four books,[3] is a 'Whole Duty' of the family, in which Alberti discusses the problems of household management, the relationship of the members to each other, expense, friendship, and the like. As a practical, and to some extent a theoretical, thesis, it shows no great originality, and may be described as a pot-pourri of humanistic and mediæval speculation, of Xenophon and Tully, with the persistent commonplaces which we find in *La Tour Landry* and its fellows. It is more valuable as a picture of contemporary manners, or rather as supplying with Alessandra Macinghi-Strozzi's Letters and later works like the *Cortegiano* the material for a very complete study of the inner life of the epoch. It hardly challenges comparison with Ascham's writings, for the Englishman confines himself within

Alberti.

[1] Whether first in Latin or in Italian is still in dispute.

[2] Ed. Bonucci, Florence, 1844-49.

[3] The authorship of the third book, *Economico*, has long been a matter of dispute, but at present the consensus of critical opinion is against Agnolo Pandolfini and in favour of Alberti. See Pellegrini, *Giornale stor. della lett. ital.*, viii., and Symonds, *Renaissance*, iv. 167 *et seq.*

narrower bounds, and is more exclusively literary in intention.[1] Yet in their attitude to vernacular prose they are identical. Alberti of necessity respected Latin, but he urged that Tuscan was not only a worthy medium, but that it should be used in the discussion of all matters not intended for the exclusive use of scholars. To this end it should be perfected, even by the aid of Latin models. In practice Alberti went farther than Ascham, who, though himself a Latinist, set himself against an inkhorn English. He follows Boccaccio rather than the simpler style of the *trecentisti*, and clags his work too often with the idioms and periods of classical style. Despite his honest purpose in behalf of Italian prose, the result reminds us of the retort of the author of *Toxophilus* to one who had been defending the enrichment of English prose style: "If you put malmsey and sack, red wine and white, ale and beer, and all in one pot, you shall make a drink neither easy to be known nor yet wholesome for the body." In subject and style he may owe something to the *Regola del governo di cura familiare*[2] of Giovanni Dominici (1356-1420), of whom Capponi, in his History of Florence, has said that he formed his vernacular style in great part on the

His treatment of the vernacular.

[1] Ascham, in the *Scholemaster*, speaks approvingly of Castiglione's defence in the *Cortegiano* of the union of learning with comely exercises: he could not but have praised Alberti's attitude to the physical and intellectual education of youth (*Della Famiglia*, Bk. I.)

[2] Strangely enough written at the request of a Bartolommeo degli Alberti.

Latinity of the Fathers and ecclesiastical writers.[1] Alberti's sincere interest in the development of the vernacular is shown in his promotion of a "certame coronario" at Florence, a contest in which a silver crown was offered for the best poem on "La vera Amicizia," and which we recognise as a Renaissance variant of the mediæval 'consistory' or *puy*. His other more important Italian prose works are the *De Iciarchia* (*c.* 1470), an extension of his social philosophy to civil life and its duties; the *Tranquillità dell' Animo* (1440), a dialogue *rechauffé* which borrows more than its title from Seneca; and the *Teogonio*, a dialogue in which he proclaims the delights of solitary retreat into the country, not as the Wordsworthian Recluse but as the Miltonic 'Wisdom,' in order to flee the "bustle of resort" for the friendship of his books and better thoughts. This beautiful expression of what was undoubtedly a prevailing mood with the scholarly Alberti may perhaps explain the satirical attacks which he made in several short pieces on the female sex; but it may be that in these—if indeed they are by him—he was but following in a literary way that persistent and not too serious mediæval tradition, which in the fifteenth century had received a new lease of life in the *novelle* and farces.

The *Hypnerotomachia Poliphili* (1467) of the Venetian Francesco Colonna (? 1433-1527), a Dominican of S. Niccolò at Treviso, is one of the most interesting documents to the comparative student of the Trans-

[1] Quoted by Signor D'Ancona, *Manuale*, ii. 118.

ition Period.[1] Its importance is derived, not from any absolute literary merit, but from the fact that it shows more unreservedly than the works of more disciplined minds the jumble of mediæval and Renaissance sentiment. We may believe that it was something of a riddle to its own age, in which its popularity was small, and we can understand how one of its early editors imagined that it had an alchemical meaning of which the key was already lost.[2] When Rabelais speaks of the sages of Egypt who used hieroglyphics "which none understood who were not skilled in the virtue, property, and nature of the things represented by them," he cites 'Onis Apollon' and 'Polyphile, au *Songe d'amours.*'[3] It is an allegorical story of the passion of Poliphil for the nun Polia, of his quest for her through temptations and perils of amazingly mystic perplexity, of his final encounter with her in the temple of Venus, and of their departure together to the island of Cythera: but what there is of plot is less coherent and intelligible than in the most ecstatic variants of the theme of the Rose. The prevailing tone is more strongly of the Renaissance; the form more suggestive of the past. As an allegory of the most persistent and involved kind, it is essentially mediæval, and in the tags and details throughout it is reminiscent of the *Roman de la Rose*; but

Hypnerotomachia Poliphili.

[1] 1st edit., Aldus, 1499 (with woodcuts); ed. Popelin, Paris, 1883. A portion was Englished, with the sub-title, *The Strife of Love in a Dream*, by R. D., in 1592, and was reprinted, ed. Lang, Lond., 1890.

[2] See Symonds, *Renaissance*, iv. 192. [3] Bk. I. ch. ix.

in spirit, in its eclecticism, its lustiness, its luxuriousness, there beats the pulse of the New Age. Its over-elaboration and pedantry are the vice of humanistic erudition, not the encyclopædic vagaries of the older monks; and images and metaphors are piled to excess, not as in the familiar catalogues of the mediæval poets, but with the mad delight of the virtuoso or with the passion for cumulative and extravagant effect which stirred the younger Renaissance. The moral lesson of the visit of Poliphil and Polia to the city of the tombs of unhappy lovers is in the subdued tone of the neo-pagan philosophy.[1] The Venus of the *Roman de la Rose* and its imitations always plays the part of a superior in her orderly Temple, and she is something of a martinet in her care of lovers: Colonna's Venus is the more comely and ripe goddess of the Old and New Greece. Colonna is nominally and formally a cloistered monk, but his thoughts and longings are for things artistic, for architecture, and chased vessels, and Bacchic triumphs, for the rush of experience and the pleasures of sense—the lusty Poliphil who, in the search for his Πολιά, or the beauty of eld, too willingly lingers to gaze on marble statues and unrobed nymphs. The language of the Dream is a strange conglomerate of Italian and Latin. It is not exactly the macaronic language of the French sermons or the early drama generally, but rather the "despumating of the Latial verbocina-

Its historical position in motif

and in language.

[1] The notion of the tombs was already familiar in Chartier's *Hospital d'Amours* (*c.* 1441), and King René's *Cuer d'Amours Espris.*

tion" which disturbed Tory and Rabelais. This type arose more readily in Italy than in France and elsewhere, though it is probable that it was less popular than the more honest macaronics, which we find even in the writings of men like Politian. There are no qualities of style in this fantastic *gergo*; but it has the scientific value of a pathological condition.

Evidence of a like hybrid style might easily be culled from the Spanish prose of the century. The affectation is sometimes Italianate, sometimes Latinistic, sometimes both. Enrique de Villena, the more renowned Juan de Mena, and hacks like Alfonzo Fernández de Palencia (1423-92), decorate and twist the native Castilian. Poetry and prose had been touched, as it were, by the breath of Gongorism. The conditions of intellectual life in Spain, the intercourse with the Italian mind, both in its national and humanistic moods, and the fantastic ceremonial of a chivalry which was not yet a mere tradition, fostered this tendency, and indeed make the authors of these 'eccentricities' more faithful exponents of the national genius than the *Rhétoriqueurs* are of the French or even the Italian mystics of the Italian. The tendency is least seen in the Chronicles, but even these, knightly accounts written for knightly audiences, are streaked with the fancies of the 'high style.'

Spanish Prose.

Spanish prose is in a preparatory stage in the fifteenth and early sixteenth centuries. Its subjects are chosen from the familiar round of romance,

chronicle, pious and didactic wisdom, chivalric codes, and domestic economy. There is little originality in any quarter, and there are few works which, like the *Celestina* or the *Mar de Historias*, have more than mediocre interest.[1] The greatest activity is in the Chronicle, which is developed on lines similar to those in France, though the incentive to this literary form in the latter was of a different kind.[2] The Spanish Chronicle, like its European neighbours, tends more and more to treat special periods and events, to leave the "Sea of Histories" for the narrower streams of Memoirs and Biography. Its atmosphere is always courtly and grandiloquent, but it has the strong merit of accuracy, and its pictorial quality gives it a value in the sketching of character which is not excelled by the Burgundian in his least flamboyant mood. Ayala, at the close of the previous century, had supplied a model of straightforward and methodical historical writing for his successors. His critical spirit—in some respects like that of Commines, though not on the ethical side—changed the tenor of Spanish historical prose. Throughout the fifteenth century it is constantly asserting itself both in the conception of the subjects and in the attention to the actual facts to be recorded. It sorted well with the picturesque instincts of the Spanish historians, giving their work at once that flavour of authenticity for which they are

The Chronicles.

[1] The *résumé* in this section is intentionally brief, as Mr Hannay has already discussed much of the material in vol. vi.

[2] Apart from the patronage which some of the Spanish kings, like the French kings and Dukes of Burgundy, had given to historiography.

remarkable above their contemporaries and an opportunity for the further elaboration of these pictorial details and *personalia* which delighted the age. In these respects the anonymous *Crónica de Juan II.* and Fernán Perez de Guzman's concluding portion of the *Mar de Historias* are the most outstanding examples. And like qualities are to be found in the less ambitious subjects of the times, as, for example, in the *Claros Varones de Castilla* of Hernán del Pulgar (*d.* 1492?), who has been called the disciple of Pérez de Guzmán, and in the *Libro del Paso Honroso* of Pero Rodríguez de Lena. The latter, 'The Book of the Passage of Honour,' is an account of a remarkable chivalric escapade at the bridge of Órbigo, near León in 1434. One Suero de Quiñones, desiring to be free from a vow to wear an iron necklet each Thursday in honour of a lady, challenged the passage of the bridge to all comers. Quiñones was himself wounded, but he and his nine champions had the satisfaction of having broken over threescore lances and engaged in six hundred and twenty-seven conflicts, extending over thirty days! This story has the semblance of perfect accuracy, and is described also in the Chronicle of Juan II. It presents us with a more fantastic picture than is to be found in the craziest romance or in the tale of the burlesque oddities of the Knight of the Rueful Countenance.

The Libro del Paso Honroso.

In the other prose works we have the limited variety of subject of the later Middle Ages: encyclopædic learning in the *Libro de los Exemplos* of Clemente Sánchez, the *Libro de los Gatos*, or the alle-

gorical *Visión deleitable* (*c.* 1460) of Alfonso de la Torre; specialist pedantries like Villena's treatise of the Art of Carving (*Arte cisoria*, 1423); satire like Alfonso Martínez's *Reprobación*; or didactic speculation, in dull books like Juan de Lucena's dialogue of the *Vita Beata* or Diego de Almela's *Valerio de las Historias*. There is no counterpart to the Italian epistolary matter, beyond, perhaps, the correspondence of Pulgar and that of the great Columbus. Another prose-work, the *Cárcel de Amor* of the love-poet Diego de San Pedro, deserves mention as a connecting-link between the Amadis type of romance and the *Celestina* and its later developments. This popular tale of the love of Leriano for Laureola, daughter of the king of Macedonia, is a conglomerate of allegory and knightly romance. In the early portion the hero's enemy is Desire, a kind of Spenserian monster, who shuts him up in the torment-chamber of his castle. After his release Leriano battles for his mistress like a good paladin, and suffers with the best of them from the false report of a rival. Though the truth is made clear, his mistress, now morbidly concerned for her honour, remains indifferent, and allows her distressed lover to waste in sorrow. The book is almost the only example of prose romance in the Spanish Transition, and it shows both the decay of the older allegorical *motif* and the slackening of the romantic energy.[1]

Other types.

The Cárcel de Amor.

In Germany, on the other hand, the greater part

[1] Translated by Lord Berners. See *ante*, chap. x., p. 337.

of the prose-work is a recasting of romantic material. Of chronicles, books of popular science and household management, sermons and moral treatises, there is no lack; but the main interest of the century is in retelling the older verse 'matters' of Lancelot or Melusine or Troy, and in the preparation of the vast collection of 'Volksbücher' which served as the staple of entertainment to the sixteenth century. The most remarkable fact about this extensive literature is its unoriginality. The majority of the pieces are of French origin, others are from mediæval Latin, Italian, or Spanish sources, and not a few are directly humanistic. Romances like the *Lanzelot*, founded on the work of the Borrons, *Pontus und Sidonia*, translated (*c.* 1480) by Eleanor, daughter of the Scottish poet-king James I., and wife of Sigismund of Tyrol, the Arthurian *Wigalois* (1472), the French-Italian *Florio und Biancefora* (1499); or like Türing von Ruggeltingen's version of *Melusine*, from a fifteenth-century French prose rendering of Jean d'Arras's Latin story; or like the *Histori von dem grossen Alexander* (1472) of the astrologer Johann Hartlieb, the *Von Euriolo und Lucrecia* of Niclas von Wyle (*d.* 1478-79) or his rendering of Petrarch's *Griseldis*, the 'Apollonius of Tyre' of Heinrich Stainhoewel (1412-? 1480), or the 'Volksbuch' *Salomon und Markolf*, founded on a fourteenth-century version of the popular Latin dialogue of Salomon and Marolf or Morold,—all these typical examples of prose romance of the age are but re-dressings of foreign material. Beyond a few versions of 'naturalised' subjects like *Tristan* or *Wilhelm*

The German Romances.

von Oesterreich, the only remarkable piece, of German quality, is *Till Eulenspiegel*. And yet it is German only by a process of accretion and adaptation, for though it is but a further phase of the style already popularised in Pfaff Amis, Neidhart, and Pfaff von Kalenberg, it is not difficult to see that it, like its predecessors and successors in this *genre*, owes not a little, both in conception and in detail, to the *Gesta Romanorum*[1] and its offshoots. It is unprofitable to discuss the question whether Till Eulenspiegel was an historic character, or whether Lower Saxony or Flanders must have the renown of his knaveries. On the other hand, the uncertainty is rather an argument against a specific and late origin, more especially as there are critical reasons for suspecting the existence of both verse and prose Low-German texts before the extant High-German copy.[2] There may have been a veritable Till who lived in Lower Saxony in the early fourteenth century, but his association with the *espiègleries* of the popular favourite is probably as accidental or arbitrary as that of the actual George Buchanan with the Master George of the Scottish chap-books. Till is a type of the adventurous merry-andrew who wandered from city to city at the close of the Middle Ages, and plied his wits to the getting of free board and lodging or to the practice of petty thefts; but the stories of his escapades are literary rather than historical, and are conceived

Till Eulenspiegel.

[1] Two German translations of the *Gesta Romanorum* appeared in the fifteenth century.

[2] Ed. Lappenberg. Leipzig, 1854. The first English version appeared in (?)1528.

in the same spirit as the *Repeues franches*, the *Comte Lucanor*, or the *Facetiae* of Poggio, Gonella, or Bebelius. As a book it has little merit, whether in its borrowed or unborrowed anecdotes; it is but childish fooling, innocent of Poggio's prurient wit, but fond of those unsavoury jokes which vex us in the same way as bad drainage or dirty habits. Its chief value lies in the fact that its fundamental idea is but the re-expression of a *motif* which lies at the root of other contemporary literatures and of other literary forms of the age. Till's fun and the confusion of his victims come from the simple trick of taking everything and everybody literally, or in devising misconstructions on all occasions. Like the husband in the farce he sticks to the letter, and will not help any one out of the tub. He will allow no metaphor; but, like the shepherd in *Pathelin*, he plays the dunderhead for the success of his own schemes. Beneath this cunning idiocy, which is the base of each type of story in the collection—in the confounding of *henep* with *senep* (x.), in the exposure of the priest in the church-play (xiii.), in the ruse on the landlady (xxxiii.), in the teasing of the spinner (li.), in the lesson on colour-blindness to the deluded peasant (lxviii.)—lies the same satirical and cynical intention which is expressed in the French 'Fous,' in Brant's *Narrenschiff*, and in other examples of the popular literature of the Cap and Bells. The universal text, "All men are fools," is his also, as he tells the gaping crowd who assembled to see him fly from a balcony: "I thought there were no fools besides myself, but in sooth I see that the city is full

Its satirical motif.

of them." "A wretched joker," say the fools, "but he has spoken the truth" (xiv.) On another occasion an innkeeper asks him what trade he follows. "None," answers Till, "but my profession is to speak the truth" (xxx.) His satire is in general terms. He pokes fun at the clergy and physicians, though only occasionally; but he has no peasant's brief against the comfortable burgesses, as some German critics have ingeniously thought. The universality of the book probably commended it to popular favour and helped it in competition with wittier and happier rivals. Its exclusive reliance on action suited the dramatic instinct of the age; its democratic cynicism commended it to the triumphant *bourgeoisie*; and its thesis of human folly suited alike the conventions and the moralising spirit of the Transition.

Minor German prose.

The other varieties of German prose are, as a whole, barren of literary interest and negative in their influence on succeeding forms. History had passed, as elsewhere, from the ambitious incompetence of the Universal Chronicle to the business of town-diaries and memoirs, like the *Cronica van der hilliger Stat von Cöllen*, or Windeck's *Leben Kaiser Sigismunds*, or the multitudinous Low German monographs on Lübeck and the seaboard towns and provinces, or the Swiss chronicles of Diebold Schilling and Petermann Etterlin. Didactic prose is best represented in the quaint *Ehebuch* of the humanist Albrecht von Eybe (1420-1475), which discusses the old question, "Ob eim man ne sei zu nemen ein elich weibe oder nit," and in his *Spiegel der Sitten* or *Speculum morum*, in

the German sermons (partly translated from the Latin) of Brant's admirer, Johann Geiler von Kaisersberg (1445-1510), and in the crowd of Low German 'mirrors of conduct,' like the *Spegel der Conscienten*, the *Spegel der Sachtmödicheit* (1487), and the *Spegel aller lefhebber der sundigen werlde*. Even in the earlier efforts of the Humanists, whose work will be considered in the next volume, it is hard to recognise any direct influence upon the vernacular art, or, we may add, any definite realisation of the deeper spirit of the Renaissance. Von Eybe's *Margarita poetica* is a mere affectation of humanistic rhetorical science; and the labours of Jacob Wimpheling, Johann Reuchlin, and even Conrad Celtes, the laureate and hope of the New Germany, are palsied with the pedantries of the grammarians, and, except on rare occasions, have no higher literary claims than the Books of Courtesy and Regimens of Health which were as popular in Germany as elsewhere.

Apart from all these examples of what we may call mere Teutonic intelligence stands the great book of Thomas à Kempis,[1] an Augustinian brother of Mount St Agnes, near Zwolle. From a very early period the question of authorship assumed the gravity of an international dispute, in which rival scholars fought for the respective claims of Jean Gerson, Chancellor of the University of Paris, of a doubtful Gersen or Gessen, an Italian, of Thomas à Kempis, and even of S. Bernard. The most recent evidence,

[1] More fully, Thomas Haemmerlein (*Latine* 'Malleolus') of Kempen.

derived from a careful textual comparison of the original MS. of the *Imitation*[1] with the accepted works of Thomas, is strongly in favour of his claim.[2] The text seems to have been finished about 1441, and to have obtained an immediate popularity. No less than eighty editions are known to have appeared before 1500; and of these many were translations in the vernaculars.[3]

The De Imitatione Christi.

The living quality of the *Imitation* comes from its universality, its irresistible appeal to the general conscience, and the directness and simplicity of its style. It is interesting to note that whereas Hallam in discussing the question of origin detected "numerous Gallicisms or Italicisms," one of the latest editors, M. Ruelens, at the same task, has discovered "frequent Germanisms."[4] There may be some truth in both statements, for the language of the *Imitation*, though 'low' and even barbarous, has a cosmopolitan appropriateness with the universal terms of its thesis. Considerations like these probably inspired a certain French theory, which was sufficiently plausible till more positive evidence was forthcoming, that the book

[1] Reproduced, with an Introduction by M. Charles Ruelens, of the Royal Library, Brussels, Lond., 1879.

[2] See F. R. Cruise's *Thomas à Kempis* (1887), and Malou's *Recherches historiques et critiques sur le véritable auteur du livre*, &c. Karl Hirsche in his *Prolegomena zu einer neuen Ausgabe der I. C.* (1873, 1883) states the fullest case for the *rhythmical* construction of the *Imitation*. The alternative title *De Musica Ecclesiastica* is found almost exclusively in the English MSS.

[3] *Ante*, chap. x., pp. 324, 325.

[4] See also Ingram (E.E.T.S.), pp. 285, 286.

is the final expression, in collected form, of a number of pious sentiments and religious aphorisms which had filtered down from the early Middle Ages and from a variety of sources.

A contemporary contrast.

The universal quality of the *Imitation* is exclusively mediæval; in its directness, and in what we may call the intimacy of its expression, it owes nothing to the modern spirit. Its personality is but the personality of a great book, untouched by the egoism of the Renaissance. It represents the unalloyed beauty of what was best in the early Middle Ages, and it is a protest as much against the pedantries of a degenerate scholasticism as against the hypocritical piety, or even the general cynicism, of its age. In contrast with all the literary work of the Transition—with the respect for tattered tradition, the lack of enthusiasm, and the slow awakening to new artistic ideals—the *Imitation* turns back again to that conception of life and duty which had fascinated simpler and perhaps more pious generations. It is indifferent to all the domestic instincts, though the *bourgeoisie* is astir and setting its house in order; and it upholds a strenuous monasticism, when even the Church is already smitten with a pagan delight in everything human. Its pious enthusiasm and its plea for humility are of quite a different order from the methods of the religious literature which was attacking the coldness and selfishness of the times. It makes no compromise with the world as Menot or Geiler von Kaisersberg did by tickling the consciences of the frivolous; it does not anathematise as Maillard

or Savonarola did; nor is it erotically rapturous like the Italian followers of Jacopone da Todi. There is nothing fantastic or violent in its argument or devotion. "Si non potes te talem facere qualem vis, quomodo poteris alium ad tuum habere beneplacitum?" "Si vis utiliter scire aliquid et discere, ama nesciri et pro nihilo reputari." [1] This is not the language of the fifteenth-century moralists or religious enthusiasts. It is a voice apart, which, when it warns its hearers against setting store on physical beauty,[2] has no special quarrel with the Greek gods of the Renaissance. When Thomas concludes with the Preacher "Vanitas ergo vanitatum, et omnia vanitas," he refers to the shortcomings of the inner religious life, not to the finery and banqueting of an erring laity. But when he speaks of the passing glory of the world, he strikes a chord which vibrates in the deeper soul of the century. "Dic mihi, ubi sunt modo omnes illi magistri quos novisti bene dum adhuc viverent et in studiis florerent? Iam eorum praebendas alii possident; et nescio utrum de eis recogitent. In vita sua videbantur aliquid, modo autem de illis tacetur." [3] Yet Villon and the poets and Thomas à Kempis reach this truth from different sides; they through worldly experience, in the sober moments after ill-luck and unrest, he, like S. Bernard, with the complacent conviction of the ascetic. His attitude to woman has

[1] Bk. I. chap. xvi., § 2, and chap. ii., § 3. The oft-quoted 'ama nesciri' is taken from S. Bernard, Serm. 3, in Nativ. Dom. (See E.E.T.S. edit., p. 285.)

[2] *Ibid.*, chap. vii., § 2.

[3] *Ibid.*, chap. iii., § 5.

neither the bitterness of the distrest saints nor the cynical animosity which became the fashion, if not the mood, of European thought as monasticism grew corrupt and chivalric ideals fell away. "Non sis familiaris alicui mulieri, sed in communi omnes bonas mulieres Deo commenda." The appearance of the *Imitation* and its great popularity in the fifteenth century were symptomatic of no reactionary change in the public mood. The bell had "rong to evensonge," but its notes awoke in recollection in the watches of the restless night which followed. And even in the high noon of the Renaissance, in moments of lull, the solemn music breaks upon the inner ear, and is again lost—as has happened since, and will happen yet again. This is the perennial quality of the Middle Ages, from which there is no Transition.

CONCLUSION.

A CONCLUSION is perhaps less appropriate or useful here than it is in the accounts of other centuries; for, where nothing is concluded, a sense of uncertainty in the mind of the reader has an æsthetic value, which may be lost in a more analytic interpretation, based on the knowledge of after-events. A summing-up becomes, by reason of that later experience, a prophecy rather than a judgment. In the present case the temptation to such a pleasant speculation must be the more strenuously resisted, as the purpose of the succeeding volume is to focus and define some of the images which are suggested here in blurred outline. Nevertheless, we are not precluded from a moment's delay over two general considerations which must have forced themselves on the reader ere the close of this *résumé*.

The first is of the nature of a caveat. The lesson of the restlessness, or what we may call the 'fluidity,' of the Middle Period is that there is no sudden break in the development of European literature. We have outlived the school-book fiction which dates the New

Era from the Turkish Act of Grace in 1453, but we are still rather prone to talk of a spiritual cleavage between what we choose to call the Middle Ages and what we understand by Modern Times. Yet the closer the acquaintance with the literary material of the so-called Transition, the stronger must be the conviction that such a conception is forced and erroneous. I should go further, and say that in this period, more than in any other, it is difficult, without that knowledge which comes from our modern perspective, to discover any absolute or *necessary* proof of general change. A single stanza will suggest both Jean de Meun and Spenser; a single tract S. Bernard and Rabelais. To decide who in this motley crowd are the old-fashioned people, and who are fixing to-morrow's mode, is neither easy, nor, I venture to think, free from critical risk. We, as moderns, incline to seek in these changing phases for hints of things which have happened on our side of Time. A pride of ancestry sends us back to the origins of the heritage which we enjoy, to the first expression of those ideas with which our own are still in sympathetic kinship. It is the nemesis of our modern egoism that we revive the derided pedigrees of the Middle Ages in the Noahs and Evanders of the Fifteenth Century.

The second, and main, consideration is that there is a closer parallelism of national ideas during this time than in more energetic and original epochs. I have already said that the lack of individual genius may prove to be a positive aid in the comparative study of the progress of European letters. This is the chief

compensation which is offered to the student by this commonplace century, and its value lies in the evidence not only of similar processes at work in different literatures but of a definite interaction between each—a synchronism and an identity of *motif* more thorough than in those later influences and counter-influences which derived their force from individual genius, or the fashion of a coterie, or a national upheaval. Such is to be expected, for the intellectual fabric of the Fifteenth Century still rested on a mediæval base; the differences implied in more individual and national conditions are not yet possible, or hardly possible. When these conditions are established, uniformity in ideas, or a simultaneous development, cannot be maintained or hoped for. In the Fifteenth Century, therefore, which has not yet broken with the system of the Middle Ages, nor has felt the distracting pleasures of larger personal effort, we have ampler opportunity than in any later period for the realisation of that criticism "which regards Europe as being, for intellectual and spiritual purposes, one great confederation, bound to a joint action and working to a common end."

I have endeavoured to show that there is a remarkable psychological identity in the literatures of the Transition. The transformation of the double purpose of the *Roman de la Rose* follows the same main course in all; and what is true of the effect of certain tendencies in one—whether cynical, *bourgeois*, realistic, or even individual—is, with minor allowances, true of each of its neighbours. We recognise a close sym-

pathy in those moments of expression which appear to be least dominated by convention and tradition—in those undernotes of the century, which, did they not occur in the best portions of each literature, might seem to be fervours of individual genius. The sweet despair of the dream of the *Dames du temps jadis* is not Villon's alone, but Dunbar's, and Manrique's, and Menot's, as it was S. Bernard's. The *Vanitas vanitatum* of the Preacher is the persistent theme of both North and South. The poets have a common purpose and an artistic affinity in their phantasies of Death—in the *Timor mortis* and in the grizzly *Danse macabre*. And the satirical message of the Fool is not delivered only to the good folks of Strassburg or Paris, but to the whole realm of Narragonia.

Remarkable as is this spiritual concurrence of the European literatures, it is less striking than the technical or formal parallelism which presents itself on every side. In poetry the change in the conception and use of allegory runs a similar course in all, and is followed in all by the reaction in favour of rhetorical sentiment, as shown in the work of the *Rhétoriqueurs* and in the growing academic interest in the art of poetry. The sonorous dignity of the metrical romance has fallen into disrepute, and is yielding to the crisper rhythms of the ballad. The drama, after nurture for three centuries in Church tradition, realises simultaneously in each tongue its individual purpose in European art. Prose, after a poor apprenticeship in the vernacular, suddenly feels its professional responsibilities, and, elated by the deference of a once

exclusive verse, sets itself to discover and improve the principles of style. In all quarters there are signs of a critical consciousness. The problem of the vulgar tongues disclosed the function of translation and the theory of rhetoric. An earlier age could not have discussed the *Roman de la Rose* as Christine de Pisan and her opponents did. The character of the numerous collections of verse and prose show an intellectual attitude which is in advance of the dull instinct of the mediæval *compendia*. The printing-press, the invention of the century, had no direct influence in promoting this reciprocity of spirit and subject. It was as yet too new a thing. And, when we consider how its effect as an international force in later times has been limited to strangely narrow and personal channels, it is less surprising that in this time it was so slight.

If there be any common quality which is discernible throughout all these phases of European parallelism, it is that which we may express by the term *curtailment*. The Transition has lost appetite for the long-sustained efforts of the Middle Ages. Despite the garrulity of the Lydgates and Lefrancs, the general tendency is to the shorter style of Villon, and Santillana, and Dunbar. The boundless stories of the romances have lost their spell; they are crystallised into separate episodes, sometimes in the form of the romance-poem, sometimes in the more abridged style of the ballad. The dramatic cycles are burst asunder, as much by literary as by histrionic necessity. Prose alone seems to be the exception, if only because of

the laborious recensions of the metrical romances. *Prima facie*, such curtailment might be expected in the most recent and most formless of literary varieties; yet the judgment is rather illusory. The Chronicle is designed less and less on the grand scale of the mediæval Universal History; it is concerned with periods, with special campaigns, with the stories of great houses or of cities. Commines, the greatest historian though not the best prose-writer of his age, devotes himself to a short span of the political life of France. The *Vite* and Letters supply the best examples of Italian prose. The course is analogous to that which appears in the ballad-treatment of the stuff of romance, where the adventures of the Paladins and their henchmen are broken up into separate passages, and where each is rounded into a complete anecdote. We might say, further, that there is something of the occasional in the prose conception of history, just as there is in the character of contemporary poetry. The didactic prose may be unwieldy, as didactic prose has generally been, yet even it shows symptoms of that abridged wisdom which is the note of the coming Essay. The presence of this general tendency to curtailment, both in subject and in form, occurs with strict theoretical propriety at a time which we call, for lack of a better name, the Transition, that mid-period of experiment and panting repose, in which Europe took breath between the adventures of Roland and the exploits of Godfrey of Bulloigne.

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